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CHRISTUS IN ECCLESIA

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CHRISTUS IN ECCLESIA

Sermons on the Church and its Institutions

BY

HASTINGS RASHDALL, D.Litt., D.C.L. 1858-1924

FELLOW AND TUTOR OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD
PREACHER AT LINCOLN'S INN, 1899–1903

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TO

MY MOTHER

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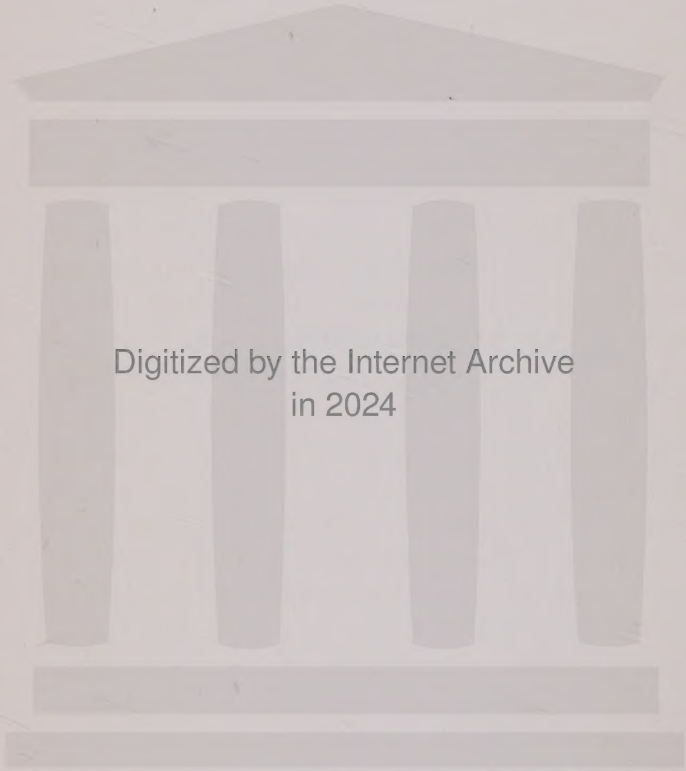
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PREFACE

THE sermons comprised in the present volume were preached for the most part in the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn in the course of the five years during which I held the office of Preacher to that Society. Some of them have also been delivered in various Parish churches or College chapels. The volume may be considered to some extent a supplement to, or continuation of, the volume entitled *Doctrine and Development*; but in sermons limited to some five and twenty minutes it has not been possible to aim at the comparative fulness of treatment which is allowable in a University pulpit, and the theological questions dealt with are for the most part of a less fundamental order. Their object is to explain in a rational manner what has sometimes been called the institutional side of Christianity. There is a widely spread assumption —sometimes made by its friends, more often by its critics and opponents—that liberal Theology necessarily leads to a negligent or disrespectful attitude towards all external expressions of the religious life, if not to the religious life itself, at least on its devotional side.

That it sometimes has that effect is unfortunately undeniable: that this tendency is neither logically nor practically inevitable, I have endeavoured in these sermons to make plain. As I read over the pages, the obviousness of much in them makes me doubt whether they can be worth publication; but experience shows that even highly educated persons, who have little leisure for such reading, do welcome very simple statements or restatements of Christian doctrine. Much that is in itself reasonable, and even obviously reasonable, has come to seem otherwise by long association with what is false or doubtful or unintelligible, and the mere statement of old truths without what has hitherto been associated with them, presents itself as something more or less novel. Even to discover that another has thought what one thinks oneself is often a help to greater clearness and definiteness of religious belief. Many are now engaged in the task of theological reconstruction, but I do not know of any book, with which I should be in general sympathy, covering exactly the ground of the present work. And, after all, the main justification of sermons, whether published or unpublished, is the fact that preaching is intended to remind people of what is rarely denied but often forgotten.

I have given in the sermons themselves, and in the few notes which I have appended to them, as much historical statement as seemed necessary to explain the nature and meaning of the institution with which I was dealing. I have endeavoured to take

account of all new light on the various subjects dealt with, to avoid uncritical assumptions, and (in doubtful critical questions) to indicate the possibility of more than one opinion, though I have not thought it necessary at every turn to refer to critical doubts or difficulties which I do not myself feel, or which seemed to me unimportant for the purpose in hand. I need hardly say that I have not the slightest idea of adding anything to what is already known on such matters. The book is not intended for professional scholars. Though it deals to some extent with theoretical and controversial questions, its purpose is mainly practical. It aims at explaining some of the institutions, ideas, and practices of the Christian Church to educated men and women, with a view of rendering participation in its services and ordinances more possible, more intelligent, and more reverent, and with the ultimate purpose of helping on growth in the Christian life.

I have to acknowledge valuable help in looking over the first proofs from my friend the Rev. W. C. Allen, Fellow and Sub-Rector of Exeter College, and to thank my sister for the pains which she has bestowed upon the final revise.

H. RASHDALL.

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I.

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT.

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you"—or (margin of Revised Version) "in the midst of you."—LUKE xvii. 20, 21.

I.

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT.

THE Kingdom of God often advances most rapidly —that is to say, human society is often advancing most rapidly toward its divine ideal—when the sound of religious controversy is least heard in the streets. But still, one way in which at times the coming of the Kingdom is as it were tangibly felt, is in the occurrence of what we call great religious movements.

At the present moment,[1] when the public mind is a good deal excited by a reaction against the extremer developments of the Oxford movement, we are in some danger of underestimating the work that it has done. It will not therefore, I trust, be out of place if I endeavour on this and the following Sundays to insist upon some of the permanent gains which have resulted to the Church through the movement inaugurated by Newman and Pusey sixty years ago. Afterwards, I hope to deal with some of the deficiencies of that movement, and with the expansion or correction which its teaching demands.

Now, the first point that I should like to insist upon is that the movement was, above all things, a

[1] The sermon was preached in 1899.

religious movement. Whatever we may think of its distinctive theological tenets, we must not forget that. It was coloured, of course, by the intellectual, the political, the social idiosyncrasies of its leaders, and of the environment in which they moved. But primarily it was a moral and spiritual movement; and the greatest gain that it has brought with it has been simply a deepening and quickening of religious life which has extended far beyond the limits of the High Church party, or even of the Church of England. It was a deliberate attempt to think out and to act out what seemed to its authors the real meaning of Christ's teaching in its bearing upon personal and social life. Their interpretation of Christ's teaching may have sometimes been narrow and defective, both intellectually and spiritually,— too much marred by traditionalism, too little influenced by the critical and historical temper to reproduce the true spirit of that teaching,—but we must not allow ourselves to be prevented by irritation at these limitations, and the present results of these limitations, from doing full justice to this deepest and most important side of the movement.

A striking instance of its spiritual success is to be found in the change which it produced not so much upon the average tone of undergraduate life (for it affected the many but little), but upon the more thoughtful and intellectual undergraduate circles at the time. John Henry Newman as an undergraduate at Trinity seems to have found himself almost alone

(though one must, no doubt, make some allowance for his youthful Puritanism) among a set of men almost uninfluenced by religious ideas or aspirations. Some five and twenty years later, we find in the life of Edward Freeman, a Scholar of Newman's College, an account of its condition in his time. He insists upon the religious principle, the intellectual earnestness, the severity, nay, asceticism of life, which characterised not some little coterie of Pietists, but at least the whole Scholars' set in that college. The testimony of a contemporary begins with the words, "Religion was recognised by all as having a right to the dominant control over our acts, words, and thoughts." [1]

I could wish that any form of definite Christian thought had the same hold over the minds of the abler young men at the present day as the Oxford movement exercised on so many in the thirties and the forties. And this influence on Oxford is just typical of its influence over cultivated English society in general. The Oxford movement is commonly thought of as a clerical movement (naturally most religious movements *begin* among the clergy). But if in England we are quite familiar with the spectacle of laymen,—eminent lawyers or statesmen, for instance,—full of interest in theological questions, taking a prominent part in ecclesiastical affairs, punctiliously attentive to the external duties of religion, and habitually guiding every act of their public and private life by deliberate

[1] Stephens, *Life and Letters of Edward A. Freeman*, I. p. 46.

reference to Christian principle,—if we are familiar with all this in England, while in many countries religion is apt be regarded as an affair of priests and theologians, of *dévots* and *dévotes*, it is very largely to the Oxford movement that this aspect of English society is due.

It is true that in all this the Oxford leaders were but carrying on the work of their predecessors, the Evangelicals. The High Church movement was the direct outcome of the Evangelical movement. To a very large extent its real service has been just to emancipate the Evangelical movement from some of its limitations. Although by the time of the Oxford movement, Evangelicalism, at least in its milder form, had begun to be not altogether unfashionable in sections of society, its influence on highly educated people was always diminished by its intellectual narrowness. That its austerity was unpopular with men of the world is not to its discredit. But it was too much disposed to attack certain arbitrarily selected and in themselves innocent amusements, while it was not particularly severe upon luxury and worldliness in their solemn, decorous, middle-aged and middle-class manifestations. Its theology, in its more rigid representatives, was narrow, arbitrary, and repellent; in its milder exponents, vague, emotional, and unhistorical. All intellectual pursuits not distinctly religious, all human learning, even theological learning which went beyond a purely homiletic exegesis of Scripture, it was apt to scorn as savouring of

worldliness and carnal pride. It was much enslaved to a particular phraseology, which was harsh and unlovely in those to whom it meant much, conventional and irritating in those to whom it meant little. To the best representatives of the older Evangelicalism no doubt these criticisms were often quite inapplicable, as they are still more inapplicable to the best of their spiritual descendants in our own day. But every party has to suffer from the exaggerations of its smaller men. And these were the characteristic defects of the party to which, nevertheless, is mainly due the revival of a sluggish Church and a decaying Christianity in the second half of the eighteenth century. As a consequence of these limitations, Evangelicalism never had very much influence over the academic mind—least of all at Oxford, or over the intellectual classes elsewhere. It had indeed, through the instrumentality of Charles Simeon, effected a marvellous transformation in the moral tone of Cambridge, but it cannot be said to have dominated the intellectual life of that University. No important name in literature can be associated with it since the death of Cowper. It can scarcely be said to have produced a considerable theologian or scholar until it assumed a form which could hardly be called Evangelicalism at all in the party sense of the word.[1]

Now, from all these defects the Oxford movement rescued the great religious revival of the age that is

[1] I refer to such men as Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury.

just passing away. The intellectual horizon of the early Oxford leaders may have been narrow, but it was wider than that of their predecessors. They ceased to talk or think as if Christianity, after a few generations of comparative but rapidly decaying purity, had passed into a state of complete lethargy, from which it was only awakened at the Reformation. The leaders of the movement were learned men. Their faith rested upon something like a philosophy; they had at all events read Aristotle and Bishop Butler. They were men of high culture and much refinement, who revolted against the set phrases, the aggressive tone, the spiritual self-assertion by which Evangelical piety had sometimes been vulgarised. Intensely possessed with the paramount claims of religion, convinced of its right to penetrate and dominate all departments of life, they had more sense of proportion than the typical Evangelical; they saw that social life might be pervaded by the Christian spirit without allowing conversation to degenerate into the "dropping fire of serious remarks" so amusingly caricatured by Newman's account of the Evangelical tea-party in *Loss and Gain*. The result of the change was seen in the ascendancy which the Oxford movement exercised—sometimes only for a passing moment, sometimes throughout life—over nearly all the men of high intellectual and moral purpose who passed through Oxford at the time when the movement was at its height. And more important even than the difference of intellectual tone between the Evangelical movement and the High Church

movement was the contrast presented by their ethical temper. In the mouth of the typical Evangelical the word "Morality" was seldom unqualified by the disparaging epithet "mere." Newman, on the other hand, has told us that his whole religious belief was founded upon the existence of Conscience. That Conscience requires training, discipline, enlightenment, by the influences which proceed from Christ and His Church,—by religious belief, by a carefully cultivated religious emotion, by religious worship, — nobody ever appreciated better than Newman and his school. But in the best of Newman's followers we get rid of the attempt to erect a hard and fast line of demarcation between the moral life and the spiritual or religious life. Religion is exhibited as an intensely practical thing, a mode of life, a state of the will, and not merely or primarily as a sharply defined set of emotions labelled with the highly technical terms of experimental Theology. One result of the new tone is seen in the much greater success of the High Church teaching in its dealings with the young. In the sterner Evangelical homes (happily many Evangelical homes were not stern) religion was apt to be associated with long and dreary devotions, phrases which if unrealised were meaningless, and if realised were conducive to acute religious terror, and, above all, with a gloomy and joyless Sunday. A religion that tends to divide people sharply and baldly into saints and sinners is not a religion which gets the best out of average children or young people. The

Tractarian view of the Church as a school of Christian life allowed—as in history at large, so in individual souls—for the idea of a gradual spiritual education, growth, development.

Up to a certain point the work of Newman tended in the same direction as the work of Arnold.[1] The seriousness, the earnest search after religious truth, the effort to apply Christian principles to every department of political, social, and personal life, which was characteristic of Newman's young disciples at Oxford, was to be found also in Arnold's Rugby pupils. But for various reasons — some of them arising out of the nature of things, some of them, as we are disposed to say, mere accidents—the Arnold movement did not exercise a profound influence over the parochial clergy, while the public schools owe the Christian character which on the whole they still retain almost entirely to Broad Church influences, and were scarcely touched by the Tractarian phase of thought.[2] To this day the influence of Arnold is strong among lay and clerical schoolmasters, as that of Newman is among the parochial clergy.

But if the movement was an intensely religious and practical movement, why (it may be asked) is it so much associated in the popular mind with externals, —with altars, candles, vestments, postures, music, and

[1] See the testimony of the late W. G. Ward, *William George Ward and the Oxford Movement*, by Wilfrid Ward, pp. 72, 73.

[2] A respectful mention ought, however, to be made of the work of Bishop Charles Wordsworth, who got the Winchester Scholars publicly to say their prayers—for the first time, perhaps, for centuries.

the like? In answering this question we must distinguish between the principle and any particular application of the principle. The whole history, not only of the Christian Church but of all religions, shows us that religion cannot live without external expression. Every great religious movement has been closely associated with certain external observances—either newly invented or adapted from some foreign source, or revived and emphasised after a period of disuse or perfunctory performance. That is true even of such largely negative movements as the Reformation, whose main business was to destroy the symbols which had degenerated into idols, and to abolish the practices which had passed into superstitions fatal to spiritual life. For the extempore prayers and the psalm-singing and the long sermons of the Puritans were after all external manifestations of religion and not religion itself—more rational, perhaps, more necessary, more closely connected with the reality which they symbolised, than crosses and stained-glass windows and the like, but symbols still. And then, as the movement advanced, there very soon grew up quite a ritual which consisted in the avoidance of ritual. The Puritan was at times almost as superstitiously bent on worshipping in an ugly building as the medieval ecclesiastic was possessed with a superstitious belief in the value of a beautiful one. Some of the Puritans were even disposed to insist upon the black Geneva gown, associated in their mind with all that they held dear in the pattern

Church of Protestantism, as zealously as the Papist upon his chasuble and Laud upon those "four surplices at All-hallowtide" at which Thomas Carlyle was never tired of sneering. Every religious movement has been more or less associated with some form of outward observance. Partly, no doubt, the emphasis laid on them has been due to the limitations, the idiosyncrasies, the accidental associations of the men or the time which has given them birth, but only in part. It is a fundamental and eternal fact of human nature that spiritual realities may and must be taught through sensible media of some kind. Different races, different stages of culture, different individuals may be dependent in different degrees upon signs and symbols; and too much symbolism is undoubtedly a very serious danger to spiritual religion. But without some external signs or symbols it is scarcely possible that religion should have its proper influence on thought, act, affection, and (not least important) imagination, even as patriotism is an idea which could hardly be grasped by large masses of men without the aid of the national flag. Other signs and symbols may have their value in this direction—in the way of constantly reminding us of those ideas of God, of Christ, of duty, of immortality which we are so constantly in danger of forgetting; but by far the most important of these is worship.

One of the great services of the Oxford movement (by general admission) has been the revival among

us of the idea of worship, or rather perhaps the association of that idea with what is fair and beautiful and attractive instead of with everything that is ugly, tasteless, and slovenly. It has done for us much that Bishop Butler called out for in that almost despairing charge of his to the clergy of Durham in that deadest moment of the eighteenth century,—the year 1751 (a charge by the way which exposed him to grave accusations of Popery),—when he insisted that "external acts of piety and devotion, and the frequent returns of them, are necessary to keep up a sense of religion which the affairs of the world will otherwise wear out of men's hearts." If we want to realise the service which was done by the Oxford movement, we should compare for a moment the state of our own Churches with those of Protestant Germany. There the churches are largely deserted by the cultivated classes, not because the preachers are not learned and able, not because the educated classes have deliberately become atheistic, but because services are so dull and unattractive that people have ceased to be interested in them. Religion may survive as it were in the background of consciousness, but it has passed out of men's minds as an effective, ever-present control and inspiration,—I will add, as an ever-present joy and refreshment. In his deeply interesting book on "the Church and the Churches" the great Old Catholic theologian Döllinger, long before his breach with the Vatican, attempted a sort of comparative survey of Protestantism and Romanism as he saw them in the

middle of the century. He is full of acknowledgments to Protestantism. He recognised that political liberty, intellectual vitality, industrial energy—all that was best in German literature, in German thought, even in German theology—was Protestant. But on the religious side he pronounces Protestantism a failure; his desire, consequently, is for a sort of fusion of Catholic religion with Protestant thought. At the present moment, when the Protestants of France are by their zeal for justice showing themselves the salt of their nation, while priests have been hounding the nation on to deeds of shame, I will not for a moment allow myself to echo the fashionable disparagement of continental Protestantism. But if instead of religion he had said worship, or the devotional side of religion, Döllinger—I think it must be admitted—would have had much to say for his view of the matter. From some of the defects of continental Protestantism we have no doubt been saved by the beauty of our Prayer-Book services, and by those traditions of stately Church and seemly worship which even the eighteenth century could not entirely destroy. But it can hardly be denied that they were fast disappearing when the Oxford movement came to save us from churchwardenism in architecture, Tate and Brady in psalmody, and, generally speaking, from the lethargy of sheer dulness. However strongly we may dislike or condemn many of the particular developments of the movement, this improvement of worship must be set down as the first great gain of the Oxford movement,

—a gain, of course, which has been largely shared by all parties in the Church of England, and even by the most Protestant religious bodies around us.

Of the deeper ideas of that movement I hope to speak hereafter, and also of its limitations. But before I leave this subject of worship, let me ask for a moment whether this very simple and obvious lesson—the importance of external religion—is one of which we do not need reminding. At first sight such a reminder might appear superfluous: and no doubt there are many—nay, it may be, large classes—with whom it is precisely the opposite principle that needs enforcing. Inside the churches, no doubt the tendency is towards more and more elaborate services, if not towards the exaggerations and absurdities of Romanising ritualism. But if we look a little deeper, I do not think we shall find that an overestimate of external religion is really the danger of most of us. In some ways, indeed, it is to be feared that the ideas of the movement have acted in an exactly opposite direction to what was intended. There are people in whom the insistence upon Holy Communion has produced almost a contempt for other services — especially for sermons. Old-fashioned religious habits have been weakened,—habits such as Bible-reading, family prayers, reasonable Sunday observance,—while no new religious habits have taken their place. The great religious peril of the present day seems to me not an aggressive infidelity, not active irreligion, not even indifference of the ostentati-

ous and self-satisfied kind, but rather the danger that religion should be crowded out of life—out of education, out of home life, out of the Sunday, out of the ordinary studies of cultivated men and women, out of our daily and habitual thoughts — simply by the pressure of other occupations and interests, assisted, it may be, in some measure by intellectual perplexity and by revolt against the pettiness and wearisomeness of ecclesiastical controversy. If we want to resist this tendency of our age, we must make a personal stand against it, each of us in the regulation of his own time and habits. If we do not want Christianity to disappear from our private thoughts and inmost motives, its external manifestations must not disappear from our lives. There is, of course, one of these external manifestations which is the most important of all, and happily it is the one about which there exists the least dispute. I have no time to dwell upon it, but I cannot leave the subject of external religion without just alluding to it. The habit of private prayer, in so far as it expresses itself in words, is no doubt in one sense a symbol still (language itself is a symbol of thought); but, like language in general, it is a symbol which is so intimately connected with the reality which it symbolises, that the one can hardly exist without the other. Without the daily consecration of the life to God in thoughtful and earnest prayer, there can hardly be that effort to bring the life into conformity with the will of God in which religion essentially consists.

II.

THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."—MATT. xviii. 18 (R.V.).

II.

THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

IT is coming to be more and more generally admitted by theologians of widely different views in other matters,[1] that these words [2] (if we assume them to be the unaltered record of what fell from the Master's lips) must have been addressed originally not to the chosen Twelve, not to any special order of ministry either at the time or in after times, but to the whole Christian Church, to the whole of that great society of which Christ is the Head and all Christians are members. It is the same with all the great ministerial commissions of the Gospels. If you look through them, you will, I think, find that it is quite arbitrary and gratuitous to assume that only the Twelve, or any privileged inner circle of the Christian body, were present when they were uttered. These

[1] Among others by Bishop Westcott.

[2] The fact that these words are found only in the first Gospel makes it uncertain whether they formed part of the common source used by the first and third evangelists, and so throws some doubt upon their being an actual utterance of Christ. All that is said below will be equally true if we take the words as illustrative of the Church's idea about itself as it gradually shaped itself, under the inspiration of the Master's teaching, in the consciousness of the first Christians. I cannot myself doubt that the passage has undergone some development.

words of our text were spoken to "the disciples." We have no more right to confine these injunctions to the Apostles or to the clergy of after ages, than we have to suppose that the preceding exhortations not to offend Christ's little ones, or to cut off the offending member, were binding only upon the Twelve or upon the clergy. It is important, too, to notice the immediate context. In the preceding verse our Lord has been enjoining His disciples to bring their quarrels to be decided by the Church or *Ecclesia*. The word *Ecclesia* or Church is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word which is in our version of the Old Testament translated "Congregation" — the whole people of Israel. Our Lord conceives of His followers, then, as succeeding to the position once claimed for the Jews alone as the chosen people,—the people privileged to enjoy the knowledge of Jehovah, and in covenant relation with Him. Indeed, it is probable that the original saying of our Lord (if we assume the injunction to have really come from Him) referred immediately to the little self-governing society which at this time met for worship in each local synagogue, and formed a kind of *forum domesticum* for the settlement of disputes among its members. At all events, in our application of the words we must refer them to the local Christian Churches, which, by a process of spontaneous development, succeeded to the synagogue societies among the Jews. It is to the whole Christian society or to its local branch that this tremendous power of binding and loosing

must be understood to be committed. If any doubt remains on this point, it ought to be removed by the next two verses; of which the first contains the promise of an answer to the faithful prayer of two or three, and the second the still more catholic promise that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."[1]

The words of our text must, then, be regarded as the foundation-charter of the whole Christian Church, not as a patent of nobility for the Christian clergy. That is the first point that it is necessary to be clear about if we would understand the passage aright. And the second is this—to observe that the words are, "*What*soever ye shall bind," not "*whom*soever ye shall bind." The whole context implies, no doubt, that the judgment upon acts would involve a judgment upon persons, and elsewhere the saying is repeated in the form, "whomsoever ye shall bind."[2] But we shall best get at the true meaning of the saying by thinking first of its application to acts. To bind an act, in the language of the Jewish Rabbis, meant to make it unlawful, to condemn the doing of it; to loose it meant to pronounce it lawful, to sanction the doing of it. Primarily the words relate to the condemning or allowing of actions, not to the condemnation or acquittal of persons. It is a power of fixing the moral ideal that is here intrusted to the

[1] The same doubt as to the accuracy of the record must extend to these words also.

[2] John xx. 23.

Christian society, saying in detail what things are condemned and what are allowed by the new law which Christ had given His disciples, but which He left it to them to apply to the changing needs and circumstances of successive ages.

In a sense every human society has a share in this tremendous power of binding and loosing. Every society, every school, every college, every club, every class, every profession, does bind some things and loose others. The moral ideal that is actually operative among any group of men is very largely determined for them by these judgments of their society, by these social bindings and loosings, and by the social penalties—amounting in the last resort to social excommunication—by which these judgments are backed up. Now it was part of Christ's plan that His followers too should have their own peculiar law of life which should be of paramount authority among its members, and which the whole body should assert and enforce by the social sanction which every society has at its command—only with this momentous difference, that the rulings of the Christian society as to matters of right and wrong, and the consequent judgments upon particular persons by which they would naturally be followed,—these judgments of the Christian society were to be valid not for time only but for eternity. "Whatsoever—whomsoever—ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." What then are we to make of this tremendous declaration? Everyone knows the appalling history

of the abuses which have attended the exercise of this power of binding and loosing in the actual history of Christendom — the degradation of this high prerogative of applying and enforcing the Christian ideal of life upon a voluntary society of willing believers into the mere engine of priestly ambition or of political warfare, into a mere instrument of inquisitorial police, or, finally, into a mere process for enforcing the payment of costs in testamentary or matrimonial causes. Are we to suppose, it may be asked, that every sentence of every fourth century episcopal controversialist upon his theological opponents, every fulmination of a medieval ecclesiastic bent on the extortion of fees or tithes, every formal excommunication extracted out of an eighteenth century chancellor by perjury or chicane,—are we to suppose that such bindings and loosings are ratified in heaven? Or, if we turn from the sentences on persons to the judgments upon acts, are we to suppose that the standard of morality enforced by the ecclesiastical courts of any age or Church can be taken as infallible revelations of the Christian ideal? Have there not been periods in which the actual Church organisation has repeatedly, systematically, almost universally, called good evil and evil good—found soft names for oppression and cruelty and injustice, and treated as crimes toleration and charity and social justice? And if we disallow these claims by saying that the councils who made the laws and the prelates who passed the sentences were not the whole

of that society to whom these powers were committed by its Founder, can we deny that there have very often been times when such perversions of the Christian ideal and such misapplications of it to individuals carried with them the fullest assent of the great mass of the laity? There is but one way that I know of of reconciling this great text with the teaching of reason and conscience, or with the whole spirit and substance of Christ's teaching. We must recognise distinctly that it was only to the ideal Church—to the Church as it ought to be—that these high promises were made and these great prerogatives intrusted. They represent to us what Christ intended that the society of His followers should be and do. Only in so far as they have really carried out their Master's design and lived up to their Master's principles can any actual society of men claim as their own these mighty privileges. Just in so far as any actual Church has fallen short of her Master's ideal, has bound things which the Master's spirit would have loosed, and loosed things that her Master's spirit would have bound,—so far her bindings and loosings have ceased to be the bindings and loosings of a Church of God at all, and have become merely the private slander of this or that worldly prelate, this or that council of angry ecclesiastics, this or that mob of unchristian men falsely pretending to be the Church of the living God.

If this be the true interpretation of our text, we are in a position to appreciate at once the value of

what is called the Oxford movement in recalling to men's minds the true idea of the Christian Church, and the limitations by which its view of the Church was sometimes narrowed and distorted. This idea of the Church is surely a most essential part of Christianity. In the Gospel pages (if we read them without prejudice) we shall find, I think, no trace of any fixed type of ecclesiastical organisation, of any hierarchic caste, of any definite order or orders of the ministry;[1] but it is difficult to get rid of the idea that the Master did conceive of His followers as forming already, and destined to form hereafter, a society in which His teaching should be practised, taught, and handed down. The germ of the Church idea, though no doubt only a germ, may be discovered in His teaching. And observe the purposes for which this society was to exist. That its members were to have a common belief in God, in His teaching about God, and in Himself as the Messiah or Son of God, is, of course, assumed. That they would have a common worship, that in their meetings for worship they would practise the two simple rites which He had bequeathed to them, is also assumed. That would flow naturally, spontaneously, irresistibly, from the acceptance of the idea of man's relation to God, to Christ, and to his brother man. But we shall have a totally inadequate conception of the Christian idea of

[1] For proof of this assertion, see Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*. As to the later apostolic age, Dr. Hort appears to me slightly to underestimate the amount of discipline and organisation existing in the Christian society.

the Church so long as we think of it primarily as a society of men united by belief in certain doctrines or by the practice of certain rites. As conceived by its Founder, and as it actually existed in the first ages of its life, the Church was marked off from the rest of the world above all things by its devotion to a particular and distinctive ideal of conduct. "People of the Way" appears to have been the earliest designation of the Christian Church.[1] The essence of Christ's teaching was that men should treat God as their Father and one another as brothers. The Church was the society of people who were willing to live according to this rule. They were bound, no doubt, in a sense to regard the rest of the world as brothers too, but that was because all men were potential members of their society; its actual members were those who were willing to treat one another as brothers, who recognised the reciprocal rights and duties of brotherhood. You cannot in the fullest sense of the word treat anyone as a brother against his will. Brotherhood in its fullest sense implies reciprocity.

The idea of the Christian society is, then, an essential and imperishable element in Christian theology and Christian ethics. I need not now insist on the grandeur of this conception, or the woeful way in which the Church or the Churches of any and every particular time and place have fallen short of this high ideal; or, again, on the enormous and beneficent

[1] Acts ix. 2 (R.V.).

influence which even in its lowest decay and corruption this idea has exercised and still exercises upon the minds of men. And this influence will appear greatest if we bear in mind that its primary function is moral. At this day there are countries in which the visible organised Church commands little enough respect for her doctrinal formulæ, and (still more unhappily) little attendance at her formal worship. But the ideal which commands the secret, if sometimes the bashful and shame-faced, allegiance of all that is best in the modern world is still substantially the ideal which the historic Church of Christ has gradually created by her continuous action of binding and loosing on the basis of the few great principles bequeathed to it by the Founder. Imperfectly, alas! but still far more than any other visible organisation, the Christian Church has been and is what it was intended to be by its Founder, the external conscience of the world.

If it is true that the Church is an ideal, then it follows that all societies of Christians are Churches just in so far as they live up to that ideal in their corporate and social life. We cannot say "this one body is the Church and all the rest are mere sects." It does not follow, of course, that the Church idea is equally well realised and embodied by all sects, or that it is of no importance which Christian body a man belongs to. No Church fully realises the true ideal of a Church, but undoubtedly some are nearer to it than others. There may be more or less of the Church character in any particular organisation.

One body may be more of a Church than another, but wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is a body which can claim some part in the authority and in the promises bequeathed by Christ to the society of His followers. A society of two or three is a very poor and imperfect realisation of the true Church idea, but every such society is in its degree *a* Church and a part of *the* Church. Every sect, just because it is a sect, must miss something of the true Church character. We may insist, if we like, upon the importance and value of this or that characteristic of the true Church ideal —we may even (if we think history warrants us in doing so) claim that the ideal Church should have a ministry organised and sacraments administered in a particular manner —but we cannot say definitely this body is the Church and those are merely sects. No doubt the ideal of the Church is to be one, or at least to be made up of local bodies mutually recognising one another's existence and supporting each other's discipline. But then, if unity is a note of the true Church, division takes off something from the true Church character in the body that is left as well as in those who leave the main Christian society of their day and country. To put all this in a practical way— we need not doubt that for us here and now in England the best and fullest realisation of the Church idea is the Church of England, and that we shall best promote unity by belonging to it. But we need not unchurch either individual dissenters or the

societies which they form, still less the national Churches of other countries organised in a different manner from our own. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The essential note of the true Church, as St. Augustine has said in one of his more liberal moments, is "fraterna caritas" — "brotherly charity" realised in a human society: the essence of real schism lies in the want of it.[1]

The idea of a Church at its highest is the idea of an organised community for transforming human society into its divine ideal—for turning society at large into a brotherhood of men serving one another in the way that Christ enjoined upon His disciples. The visible religious community for the promotion of worship and religious fellowship and voluntary works of charity is the most conspicuous, the most complete, in a sense the highest outward and visible realisation of that idea; but it is not and cannot be the only one. But in so far as any society of men is engaged in striving together for the objects which Christ enjoined upon His followers to pursue, it becomes a partial realisation

[1] The narrowness and the breadth of Augustine's views are curiously brought together in the same passage: "Hæretici de Deo falsa sentiendo ipsam fidem violant; schismatici autem discessionibus iniquis a fraterna charitate dissiliunt, quamvis ea credant quæ credimus. Quapropter nec hæretici pertinent ad Ecclesiam Catholicam, quæ diligit Deum; nec schismatici, quoniam diligit proximum," *De Fide et Symbolo*, cap. xxi. The early schisms had been formed chiefly to maintain a policy of excessive rigour towards the lapsed,—a point which it would be well to remember before applying patristic language about schism to modern nonconformity.

of the Church idea. If we are Christians, the service of the body of Christ must demand not a portion of our lives, but the whole of them. All our work, professional, official, literary, or whatever it is, must be looked upon as work done for the body of Christ. All true service of our fellow-men is capable of being made into work for Christ's Church, if it is inspired by the Christian spirit of mutual love. And the highest importance of a firm grasp upon the idea of the visible Church lies in its tendency to break down that hard and fast division of life into two watertight compartments,—a secular life, of which the object is simply the enrichment and advancement of ourselves and our families; and a religious life, the object of which is to send us to heaven when we die. Understood in its true sense, the idea of the Church is the sum of Christian ethics. No doubt the core of that idea has often been firmly grasped and nobly lived out by men who attached little importance to any visible ecclesiastical organisation in the ordinary sense of the word. This principle of mutual service lies at the root of all morality and all noble life. But this principle requires surely some outward and visible expression in a distinct and visible organisation if it is to exercise its due weight and influence over human life. The true idea of the Church is that it should be the most conspicuous realisation and embodiment, the most powerful witness and promoter, of that principle of brotherhood in human society.

III.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."—JOHN vi. 53.

III.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

IT is perfectly natural that Christians should be predisposed to see in these words an allusion to the sacrament which so exactly sums up the idea which they express. And yet it is impossible, surely, to doubt that the original meaning of the words (in so far as they are really based upon our Lord's own teaching)[1] can have had no direct reference to that sacrament. The words must surely have meant something, must have been intended to mean something, to the disciples then and there quite independ-

[1] It is admitted by all scholarly defenders of the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel, that the discourses contained in it must represent a highly idealised account of the Master's teaching, and it is being more and more recognised by candid opponents of its genuineness that it is at least based to some extent upon valuable documents, and is not a mere work of the imagination.

The larger we suppose the contribution of the author to have been,—whether St. John or some inheritor of the Johannine tradition,—the more probable it becomes that the discourse is to some extent suggested by the Eucharistic symbolism, but all the more remarkable becomes the interpretation of the words put into our Lord's mouth by the Evangelist as a witness to the spiritual and non-realistic belief of the Church in his day about the Eucharistic sacrament. It is clear from ver. 63 that if the words in ver. 53, in the intention of the Evangelist, contained an allusion to the Eucharist, they were not meant to be simply applied to the Eucharist itself, but rather to what was symbolised by the Eucharist.

ently of a rite which was not yet instituted. And, in truth, we are not left to any doubtful conjecture as to what the Master meant by these words. They are expressly explained by His reply (a few verses later) to the disciples' remark upon the hardness of the saying. "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life."

"The words that I have spoken unto you." To feed upon Christ's body and Christ's blood means to absorb His teaching into the soul, to assimilate it, to live by it, —as the bodily life is sustained by the meat and drink which is absorbed into the system. We are right in thinking of Christ as much more than a teacher. But our anxiety to differentiate Christ from other teachers sometimes leads us to forget that primarily He presented Himself to His contemporaries in that light—as that highest, most inspired kind of teacher whom we call a prophet. Even where He is most emphatically asserting a unique and paramount claim to the allegiance of His followers, it may be of the whole human race, it is—you will observe, I think, if you study the Gospels closely—primarily the paramount claim of His teaching that He is asserting. It was His consciousness that that teaching of His—those ideas about God and man's relation to Him—came from His heavenly Father, and that they possessed a unique and enduring value for the world,—it was this consciousness that enabled Him (if we may reverently say so) to combine such commanding self-assertion with such complete forgetfulness of

self. And it is the answering recognition, by the conscience of mankind, of the supreme and unique value of that teaching that more than aught else compels us to a reverent acceptance of His claim to a unique Divine Sonship, which does no doubt carry with it a loyalty to His person going far beyond mere discipleship. But that should not make us forget that all higher claims of Christ are founded on His claims as a teacher. Loyalty to Christ means primarily believing Christ's words, attending to them, doing them. Feeding on Christ's body and His blood means living upon His words.

And that idea of living upon Christ's words is just the very root-idea of the Holy Communion. That is the idea—or at least one of the ideas—which it was meant to teach us.[1] That we desire to live by those

[1] In what sense our Lord can be said to have Himself "instituted" this sacrament, is one of the most difficult critical questions which the Gospel narratives present to us. It is quite clear, in view of the discrepancies between the words attributed to Him in the different Evangelists, that we cannot implicitly rely upon the exact accuracy of any one account. The tradition has grown—it is impossible to say how much. But we may reasonably assume: (1) That the Eucharist was based upon some existing Jewish rite, and continued in its Christian form to have many of the associations and meanings which that rite involved, to be celebrated with many of the old forms, and perhaps the old prayers. It has generally been supposed that this rite was the Passover feast, but Mr. Box (*Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. iii. p. 357) has brought forward much evidence to support the view that the original Lord's Supper was the Kiddûsh,—the common meal celebrated with solemn blessing of the bread and the cup by a Jewish household at the beginning of the Sabbath on Friday evening, and also on the eves of the great Feasts,—a view which is strongly suggested by the parallelism between this rite, with its accompanying prayers, and the early account of the Eucharist in *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. (2) That a new and specifically

words is the first thing that we mean by coming to it. St. John or (if it be so) some disciple of St. John could hardly have put together that wonderful discourse from his recollections of the Master's teaching without thinking of the last Supper which He ate with them. But it is a mistake of interpretation (as has been seen by nearly all the early Fathers and many later Romanists) to treat the saying as having in the intention of the speaker any reference to the institution of the Eucharistic meal. The sacrament is a commentary on the teaching rather than the teaching a commentary upon the sacrament.[1]

Christian significance was given to this rite in the very earliest days of the Christian Church. The universal acceptance of the Eucharistic rite from the earliest times in both Jewish and Gentile Churches, makes it reasonable to accept the tradition that this new significance, connecting the rite with our Lord's death and parting injunctions to His disciples, dates from some act and words of His during the meal which He shared with them on the night before the Crucifixion. (3) While the obligation of this rite upon Christians is certainly heightened by the probable truth of this tradition, its value cannot be said to depend upon it. It would be enough for us that it was a rite instituted in memory of their Master in the first days of His Church. The discrepancies between the Evangelists prevent our raising any great fabric of doctrine upon the assumption that we have before us the exact words which He used, and can recall the exact context in which He used them.

[1] For patristic opinions on the subject, see Waterland's *Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist as laid down in Scripture and Antiquity* (Works, ed. Van Mildert, 1823, vol. vi.), and Jeremy Taylor, *Of the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Sacrament* (Works, ed. Heber, 1839, vols. ix. and x.), chap. vi. In view of such a consensus, I am somewhat surprised at the confidence with which the Bishop of Worcester, in his scholarly and moderate work (Gore, *The Body of Christ*, p. 21 sq., p. 290 sq.) explains "the words which I have spoken unto you" (ῥήματα) as meaning "the things I have just spoken to you of—the flesh and blood of the glorified Son of Man."

It is, I think, quite as important to a right understanding of the Holy Eucharist itself as it is to a right understanding of the chapter, that we should appreciate the true relation between the sacrament and the idea. This chapter tells us what the sacrament means: it is about the reality which the sacrament signifies; we shall miss that meaning altogether if we read it as though it referred to the sign, and not to the thing signified.

I tried in a previous sermon to insist upon the services of the Oxford movement in the revival of the idea of Worship, and the improvement of its outward expression in our own Church. And a very important part of this service consists in having restored the Communion rite to its proper place in the affections, the imaginations, and the practical religious life of Christian people, not by any means exclusively in our own Communion; though it is right to add that this part of their work too had really been begun by many of the Evangelicals.[1] But here, as in dealing

[1] The suggestion that the Evangelicals made little of the Eucharist has often been made, *e.g.* by the late Mr. H. O. Wakeman in his *Introduction to the History of the Church of England*, 3rd ed., p. 451. "The Holy Eucharist, deprived of all idea of worship, and celebrated but seldom," suggests that an Evangelical did not and does not worship in Holy Communion, surely the *ne plus ultra* of theological prejudice! As to the frequency of the reception, it was distinctly the object of the early Evangelicals to promote more frequent celebrations than had hitherto been customary, though they may often have been content with the substitution of a monthly for a quarterly Communion; but weekly celebrations in Evangelical Churches were not unknown even early in the forties, when they were (I believe) far from universal among professed High Churchmen.

with other phases of the movement, we must distinguish carefully between the idea and the dogma—between the fundamental ideas which inspired all that was best in the movement and which have given it its spiritual success, and the narrow and inadequate intellectual or dogmatic expression which those ideas often formed for themselves in the minds and writings of the Oxford leaders. They were right in insisting that the Holy Eucharist ought to be the central act of Christian Worship, that it is the act round which the whole outward and visible life of the Christian community ought as it were to range itself. They were right in insisting on the practical value which the habit of regular and frequent communion has for individual souls. But to my mind a truer appreciation of the value, meaning, and importance of that sacrament has no necessary connection with what are called "high" or "Catholic" theories as to its nature. The essence of the sacramental principle is that ideas are brought home to men's minds by outward forms. And the ideas which are most dependent upon outward and visible expression are just those ideas which bind men together in societies. Obviously there could be no such thing as a religious society which had no meetings or institutions by means of which its members could realise their distinctness from the rest of the world, their own union and common purpose. And yet it was one of the most distinctive ideas of our Master that Religion is a spiritual thing not dependent upon any external observances, and therefore He left

to His society (we may say) the barest minimum of external rites, the minimum without which a religious society could hardly exist—a rite of initiation and a rite of fellowship, an act by which His followers could keep alive the memory of their Founder's teaching and realize their fellowship with one another.

Symbols, then, are necessary, and to Christians no symbols can take the place of those which have been handed down to them by tradition from their Founder. And yet the value of the symbol disappears when attention is directed away from the meaning to the symbol itself; and that tendency is promoted, as it seems to me (no doubt quite unintentionally), by a good deal of what is called "high" teaching about the sacraments,—teaching which is always insisting upon the wonderfulness, or mysteriousness, or semi-magical efficacy of the sign, and not upon the importance of the religious and moral truth which it signifies,—teaching which tends at times almost to treat the whole spiritual and moral life of man as a preparation for the worthy reception of the sacrament, instead of treating the sacrament as a preparation for a Christ-like life.

If I attempt for a few moments this morning to touch on those controversial matters which are no doubt but too apt (on both sides) to call forth un-Christian heat rather than increase of devotion, it is because I believe that the teaching to which I have alluded (though associated in the mind of those who accept it with much that is true and spiritually

valuable) has some bad spiritual effects. It leads one set of people to lose all thought or appreciation of the thing signified in their enthusiastic reverence for the sign, while another order of mind to which such language is meaningless or perplexing is apt to turn aside altogether from a rite which is associated with so much that seems to it unintelligible or superstitious.

I think it will conduce greatly to intellectual clearness to bear in mind what the doctrine of Transubstantiation really is. The doctrine of Transubstantiation was originally an attempt on the part of the comparatively enlightened thinkers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to put into a refined and philosophical form the grossly materialistic superstition which had grown up in the dark ages; and their whole exposition was originally based upon the philosophical doctrine known as Realism, in its crudest and most extravagant form. By a sort of materialising of Plato,[1] the Schoolmen had come to believe that every class of things—bread or wine, or body or blood—is made what it is by an impalpable and insensible but still local and quasi-physical substance, — a mysterious substratum, the same in each particular portion of the thing,—quite separable and distinct from the accidents or sensible properties of the thing.

[1] Not that Plato himself was altogether free from the tendency to regard the Universal as not merely real (as all sound Metaphysic holds it to be), but real apart from the particulars in which it is manifested.

In the sacrament of the Altar the substance of the bread and wine was supposed to be miraculously annihilated by the act of consecration, while its place was taken by the substance of the body and blood of Christ. This idea, that the substance of a thing can be separated from its accidents, is one which is now universally rejected alike by common sense and by Philosophy,[1] except among those whose Philosophy is prescribed to them by the necessity of upholding this doctrine of Transubstantiation. The more clear-sighted Anglican upholders of the doctrine of the Real Presence (Isaac Wilberforce, for instance) have seen that this philosophical doctrine represents the only way in which it can properly be maintained that the presence of the body and blood of Christ is in the strict sense of the word *real*,—the presence of the real thing, the very same thing that is also pronounced by this Theology to be at the same time in heaven.

The only difference between Transubstantiation and a thoroughgoing doctrine of the Real Presence is that the latter doctrine is not necessarily bound up with the belief in the annihilation of the substance of bread and wine; it may assume the form of Consubstantiation — the doctrine that both substances are present together, the substance of Christ's body and blood, and the substance of bread and wine. But this Lutheran theory of "consubstantiation" is not, I think, what is actually held by most of the modern Anglican

[1] The first Schoolman to deny this was John Wycliffe, whose "Realism" is of a peculiarly modern and enlightened order.

defenders of the Real Presence. They usually decline altogether to define what they mean. They are content with the assertion that Christ is present—in what way they do not know. But they forget that what they are committed to is the presence of Christ's body and blood, not of His Spirit, of His influence, of the spiritual help and strength which flows from the life that He once lived on earth and the life that He now lives with God.

How the presence of literal body and blood can mean anything but Transubstantiation or Consubstantiation it is difficult to see. There can surely in strictness of speech be no such thing as the spiritual presence of a material thing, if presence is to mean anything more than a presence to the minds of those who think of it. And if it is the presence of Christ Himself—of the spiritual Being—that they mean, they are bound to explain how a spirit can properly be said to have any local presence at all. Spirits do not occupy space. We may indeed, if we please, say that a spirit *is* where it acts.[1] In this sense, no doubt, we may quite reasonably talk about a real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. But in that sense the real presence is after all a purely spiritual presence—a presence in and for the mind of the faithful receiver. And no doubt nothing can be more real—if by that is meant simply true, actual, or efficacious — than a spiritual presence, as is eloquently set forth in Jeremy

[1] As is maintained, for instance, by Lotze in the chapter in his *Microcosmus* on "the seat of the Soul."

Taylor's admirable treatise on "the Real Presence." But then in that sense it is surely impossible to deny the presence of Christ wherever the influences that flow from the thought of Him are producing spiritual effects in human souls,—in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, above all in the actual Christward struggle of the moral life. And when this is pointed out, one generally finds that in the more moderate and less dogmatic of its asserters the doctrine of the Real Presence dwindles away into an assertion of some special, unique, extraordinary influence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist—something *sui generis,* different in kind, or at least in degree, from that which is exercised through any other channel. If anyone thinks it a gain to use language in a sense very remote from its original, historical meaning, there is no reason why those who take this view should not still speak of the Real Presence; only then they must not suppose they are asserting anything which is denied by the Westminster Confession or by Low Churchmen in our own Communion.

And yet this notion of a *special* presence is after all not a very illuminating one. Of course, the Holy Eucharist must be something that no other act of worship can be to the Christian who believes that Christ instituted this rite, or who attaches importance to the continuous and all but universal practice of His Church. But surely the degree or the kind of Christ-presence which any particular act of worship brings with it must depend upon the

state and circumstances of the individual soul. We cannot lay down hard and fast rules, and say that all Christians must as a matter of fact realise the presence of Christ in the Eucharist in some quite different way or sense from that in which they realise His presence in private prayer or in reading the Gospels. It is said that this particular act has a special promise annexed to it. I find no special *promise* connected with the institution of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. A special command there is, but not a special promise. If our Lord said, "This is My body," He said also, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of you." Is it not enough to obey the command, and to make the most of the ordinance for ourselves, without constructing theories as to the difference between this particular kind of grace or spiritual benefit and what may be got through other channels,—still more without denying to those who conscientiously doubt that Christ's command was intended as a permanent direction to His disciples, the Christian graces which have so visibly characterised the Society of Friends, or making a perfectly unintelligible distinction between "sacramental grace" and the grace that produces the same effect in other ways?

But is not this view of the Eucharist, it will be said, reducing it to a mere sign? As so often happens in such cases, does not a fallacy lie in that word "mere"? If there is anything in the sacramental

principle, signs are very important things. Sacraments are not mere signs but "efficacious signs" (as our Article puts it)—that is, they actually tend to produce the spiritual effects which they represent. It would be as absurd to say that we are disparaging the sacraments by calling them signs, as to say that we are disparaging human language when we say that it is *only* a system of signs. Words are signs, but they are so important that you can hardly think at all without their aid. Words are signs, but they are signs that produce the thing—that is to say the ideas—that they signify. All the great events of history are the result of words. It is words that have moulded men together into societies, that have set up and put down kings, created states, institutions, churches, revolutions, civilisations; but words have done these things only because they are the signs of ideas. We can hardly think too much of the sacraments if we will only regard them as a kind of language. It is doubtful whether any doctrine about them can really be called high doctrine, that tends to reduce them to the level of a spell or a charm supposed to do its work quite apart from the meaning which the words convey to those who use them.

Let me from these reflections draw two practical conclusions:

1. In the first place, it is well to be tender and reverent towards the belief of those who think differently from ourselves on this subject. It is a

pity, surely, to use strong language about the idolatry of the Mass and the like. This is a doctrine, surely, on which members of the same Church may agree to differ, so long as they are not forced to use formulæ or symbols which imply one view of the matter. There are theological beliefs which (with all charity and modesty) we must not hesitate to denounce in strong terms, for there are theological doctrines which degrade the character of God, theological doctrines fatal to Morality, doctrines which involve an intolerant attitude towards other Christians. The doctrine of the Real Presence can hardly be regarded in this light. It may be indirectly connected with much that has some of these effects, especially when it is associated with the doctrine that the miracle of consecration demands a Priest with apostolical succession, a notion of which there is not a trace in the New Testament or the earliest Christian writings. But of the doctrine itself (in the strict sense, which, as I have suggested, is often not really meant by those who assert it) it is enough to say that it is intellectually unintelligible and spiritually unedifying.

2. On the other hand, I do feel strongly that those who do not hold this doctrine should not hesitate to say so. They should show, both in word and deed, that practical reverence for the great symbol of Christian brotherhood is not diminished by the refusal either to accept rigid definitions in which they do not believe, or to use vague language

about the mysterious and unintelligible character of the rite in the hope of propitiating those who do believe in such definitions. Are we not sometimes too much afraid of some offensive label culled from the rich vocabulary of theological vituperation? There is a tendency sometimes to talk as though it really would be a good thing, if only it were true, that we should be able to say "the body of Christ is present on that table"—to talk as though it were a real spiritual loss not to be able to believe in such a doctrine. I venture to suggest that in this, as in many other matters, the utmost reverence may be combined with perfect intellectual clearness, perfect intellectual frankness; and I do not think it is of very great importance that we should be able to point out some unique benefit to be obtained from Holy Communion which could not possibly be obtained in any other way. The Holy Communion is worship at its highest. That surely gives it a sufficient title to our reverence. But from a practical point of view I may just suggest one or two of the special benefits of this service as compared with other forms of worship.

(1) One source of its special value lies in the fact that it calls upon us to do something for ourselves. In other acts of worship, we are, as it were, passive. We are read to, we are preached to, we are sung to, we are prayed for. Of course it ought not to be so; we ought to feel bound to pray and to praise for ourselves, whether silently

or vocally. But with the conventional services which we attend as a matter of course Sunday after Sunday, we are apt to think that it is so—that we are not making any profession, not committing ourselves to anything by attending them, just as the majority of respectable people attend them. As to the Holy Communion, the least thoughtful Christian must feel that that is otherwise. It calls upon us to examine our lives; to make a definite confession to God of definite sins; to make definite acts of penitence, of resolution, of self-dedication; and to make open profession before our fellow-men of our desire to lead the life of Christ.

(2) And that mention of our fellow-men suggests another reason for the great importance of Holy Communion. More than any other service the Holy Communion helps us, compels us to realise the idea of the Church or Christian Society. In all worship the realization of Christian Brotherhood is an important element: in the Holy Communion it is of vital importance. And that brings me to another great debt which we owe to the High Church party—the revival among us of that idea of the Church which is, properly understood, so fundamental an element not merely in Christian Theology, but in Christian Morality. Of that service I have recently spoken and hope to speak again. For the present I will only ask you to bear in mind that any true idea of the Eucharist must remain inadequate which leaves out and obscures this fundamental aspect of

it. Communion with the brethren is a vital part of that Sacrament. The Sacrament in which we symbolically eat the body and drink the blood of Christ does, indeed, primarily mean an effort to appropriate, and to conform our wills to, His teaching; but then the essence of His teaching is our brotherhood one of another in that Society which He founded—the Society of people pledged to live out that teaching of His in social life.

IV.

BAPTISM.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—MATT. xxviii. 19.

IV.

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WHEREVER Baptism is alluded to throughout the pages of the New Testament, except in this passage of St. Matthew, it is always Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ or of the Lord Jesus.[1] The plain, natural, and straightforward interpretation of the phrase is to suppose that in the days of the Apostles only the name of the Lord Jesus was used in the formula of Baptism—that the words which the Baptizer used were, "I baptize thee in the name of the Lord Jesus." If that is so, we are driven to infer that these words, put into our Lord's mouth by the present text of St. Matthew's Gospel, could not really have been uttered by Him in their present form. It is inconceivable that with this command of their Master to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity staring them in the face, the Apostles and other early Christian teachers could have gone about using a different form of words. Harmonists have tried to persuade themselves that Baptism in the name of

[1] Acts ii. 38, xix. 5 ; 1 Cor. i. 13 ; Rom. vi. 3. This formula is also found in the Didaché, though elsewhere in that doubtless composite work the trinitarian formula appears.

the Lord Jesus is just a way of saying "Christian Baptism," and that the words really were from the first, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." I can only say that if there was ever a non-natural interpretation—not, be it observed, of some difficult doctrinal idea, but—of a plain historical statement, it is that. I believe that when St. Paul and St. Luke talk about Baptism in the name of the Lord, they mean just what they say.

And we are not without corroborative evidence.

Up to the ninth century[1] or later, Councils and Popes decided that Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus was valid. That decision has since been reversed by the later judgment of the Church; but I cannot conceive how the question could have been so much as raised at so late a date if the custom of baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus had not been at one time widely diffused in the Church, or how such a custom could ever have sprung up if the text of the first Gospel, or its original source, had always been what it is in our *textus receptus*. And, further, Mr. Conybeare has recently made the interesting discovery that there are passages of Eusebius in which our text is quoted in a different form—"Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in My name, teaching

[1] We find this view taken by Nicolas I. (A.D. 858–867), Mansi, *Concilia*, t. xv. c. 444. The very frequency with which the contrary view had to be asserted (see passages on both sides in Decretum Gratiani, Pt. III. Dist. iv. c. 28 sq.) seems to indicate a wide survival of the earlier usages.

them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."[1]

That shows that as late as the fourth century of the Christian era there were still copies of the first Gospel, or of some earlier source of that Gospel, in circulation in which this injunction to Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity was wanting. There can be little doubt that that was the original tradition. It was subsequently altered, as unfortunately other passages of the New Testament were altered, to gain a sanction for the later doctrine or practice of the Church.

Baptism in the name of the Trinity must no doubt be of tolerably early origin, for we find the Trinitarian formula in use as early as the date of the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," though another part of that early Christian writing speaks of Baptism "in the name of the Lord." The insertion belongs to the same order as the famous passage about the three heavenly witnesses in the first Epistle of St. John[2] which has disappeared from our Revised Version; though it has nearly escaped detection owing to the much earlier date at which it was made and the

[1] See Mr. F. C. Conybeare's article on "The early doctrinal Modifications of the Text of the Gospels" in the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. i. No. 1 (Oct. 1902). His conclusions have been challenged by the Rev. J. R. Wilkinson in the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. i. No. 3 (April 1903), who regards Eusebius' quotation as coming not from the original text of our Matthew, which in Eusebius' copy stood as it does now, but from an olderpre-Matthean Gospel (not the Logia); but he does not doubt that in this original Gospel the text was as Mr. Conybeare supposes, and thinks that the text was deliberately altered by the compiler of our Matthew.

[2] 1 John v. 7.

much more universal reception with which it ultimately met.

Now, why do I dwell on these facts? Not from any desire to throw discredit on the existing usage of the Church in the matter of Baptism. Quite apart from this passage, there is abundant evidence that it was the custom of the Christian Society from the very earliest times to admit new converts into its membership by Baptism, in token of their belief in the forgiveness of past sins, and of the newness and purity of the life upon which they were entering. From the nature of the case, it is probable that this custom, universal among the Apostles from the very first, originated in the practice and precept of our Lord Himself. And for those who (like myself) regard the fourth Gospel in its narrative portions as an important source of history, there is explicit evidence of the fact. "The Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples."[1] As to the exact form of words to be used, it is improbable that our Lord left any precise injunction. The Church was within its right, in accordance with the growing love of doctrinal elaboration, in insisting on the use of the more technical form. No reasonable man will clamour for a return now to the simpler form, though some of us might personally wish that the change had not been made, and might even plead for the recognition of the simpler form if any body of

[1] John iv. 1; cf. iii. 22.

Christians existed which was willing to use it, while scrupling to employ the elaborated formula. But all the same this particular result (for it does seem to be a definite and unassailable result) of modern criticism, is deeply significant. Just think for a moment what a tremendous superstructure has been raised upon this text of St. Matthew by later Theology! What theories of marvellous supernatural phenomena resulting from the use of a particular form of words and wholly lost if a slightly different form be used, what tremendous exclusions and condemnations upon whole bodies of Christ's followers who (upon some mistaken scruple) have declined to follow the general practice of Christendom in this matter! And now it turns out that the text upon which it is all founded is at least doubtful. It is not merely that this particular text is shown to be no true word of Jesus, but the fate of this particular text shows the impossibility of that whole method of using Scripture upon which the narrower theories about Baptism repose. It shows the impossibility of making any important doctrine whatever rest upon some literal interpretation of some isolated saying of Jesus. So long as the only reason for believing a thing is simply and solely the fact that Jesus Christ used these words and that this alleged interpretation of them is the true one,—words taken out of all relation to their context, unsupported by the general tenor and spirit of His teaching, unsupported by the conscience or reason of those to whom they are addressed,—the mere external authority of a text can

never be a sufficient foundation on which to build great systems of doctrine, particularly when they involve us in wholesale condemnations of our fellow-Christians, or compel us to annex mysterious consequences to the due performance of an outward act. There must always remain the doubt whether the words were actually uttered, whether they have been correctly translated, whether enough of the context and circumstances in which they were spoken has been preserved to allow us to be sure of their exact meaning, and, finally, whether they are to be taken literally or in some measure metaphorically.

Let us turn, for instance, to other passages upon the same subject. When we turn to the discourse with Nicodemus about being born again of water and of the spirit, it is undoubtedly possible that this discourse, though elaborated freely in his accustomed manner by the author of the Fourth Gospel, was based upon reminiscences of an actual discourse of Jesus. I see no reason to doubt that the allusion to water is an allusion to the symbolism of Baptism. And these are additional reasons for our keeping up, nay, emphasising and making the most of the initiatory rite which comes down to us with such authority behind it. But when we are asked to believe in a marvellous spiritual change taking place in unconscious infants, which does not take place (or which we are at least forbidden to assume to take place) in Quakers who show every sign of Christ's influence upon their hearts and lives, when we are

forbidden to treat as Christians people who have neglected such a ceremony, when we are asked to look forward to a different future for children upon whom such a rite has been conferred, and for those on whom through no fault of their own it has not been conferred, then all our doubts return. I do not think the words in St. John will bear such an interpretation; but if they did, I should doubt whether our Lord could ever have spoken thus, or whether He had been correctly translated and the like. And I should appeal to the inconsistency between such a doctrine and the general tone of Christ's teaching about the Divine Fatherhood, the importance of the inward, the nature of the Brotherhood formed by His followers.

Criticism has, I believe, made impossible such an attempt to build up doctrines which are repudiated by the heart and conscience of mankind upon isolated texts, while it has left the essential value of the Gospel records just what it was before. And let no one think that the doubts which criticism has raised in such matters need extend to things more important and fundamental. If anyone were to suggest critical doubts as to whether our Lord ever said, as He is reported to have said in the 15th chapter of St. John, "This is My commandment, That ye love one another," there might conceivably turn out to be critical grounds for eliminating from the text these particular words in that particular place, or we might even be driven to agree with those who think that the whole of the particular discourse of which these words form

part represents rather the ideas of the fourth Evangelist than any actual discourse uttered on any particular occasion by Jesus Himself. We might share such doubts without our fundamental Christian faith suffering any loss. For if the words were not uttered then and there, no reasonable criticism can doubt that words like these were uttered on other occasions, or that they represent the general tone and tenor of the Master's character and teaching; nor could it diminish the authority with which they come home to our hearts and consciences, or prevent our recognising in Him whose character and teaching they represent, God's highest revelation of Himself.

And now let me come back a moment to my main subject—the meaning and significance of this rite of Baptism. There is strong reason to believe that Christ practised it; it is not unreasonable to presume that He commanded it. It is certain that the Church always practised and commanded it; and *that* by itself would be sufficient for those who believe in the authority of the Christian community, and the duty of submitting to its decisions in matters of outward ordinance. But we are, it seems to me, quite on the wrong track when we attempt to judge of the obligation or the importance of a sacrament or of the benefits to be derived from it, by simply asking how much positive external authority can be claimed for it, or what can be proved as to the consequences of using it or the perils of neglecting it. The sacraments become almost meaningless when taken out of

connection with the whole idea of the Christian community or Church. A visible society cannot exist without visible ordinances. A rite of initiation is one of the most obvious forms in which the life of any society can express itself. Most of all is this the case when it is a society which called upon those who entered it (we must for the moment think of its early converts from heathenism) for a complete renunciation of the ruling maxims, the ideas, the practices of their past life, and the adoption of a wholly new, a severer and more exacting ideal of conduct. That we might say, even if we had not (as we have) reason to think that the Founder ordained that rite to be a memorial of the forgiveness which He taught His followers to expect for repented sin and of the new life which He called upon men to lead.[1] When we ask what are the benefits of Baptism, we must not isolate the idea of this initiation from the idea of the Society into which we are initiated. The benefits of Baptism include all the benefits which we receive by being within the Christian Society. And we have a poor idea of what the Christian Society is when we think merely of the acts of public worship which are the natural and necessary outward expression of its life, or even of that other sacrament which is the most solemn expression of its corporate unity. All the knowledge

[1] I do not here intend to pronounce any opinion upon the difficult question, what sort of duration and what sort of future our Lord contemplated for the Society which *de facto* He was founding. It is enough to say that He intended Baptism to be a note of His followers.

of God that we possess, the whole revelation made in Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the hope of Immortality, the whole Christian ideal of life and all the motives and the influences which inspire us to it,—all these things may be said to come to us through membership of the Christian community, if only we have a sufficiently wide idea of what the Christian Society is. All moral ideals are social products: the Christian ideal is no exception. *De facto* we cannot deny that many unbaptized persons live within the Christian community, however strongly we may regret the mistaken spiritualism (as it seems to us) which leads them to repudiate a rite all but universally accepted by Christian people throughout the world. However much we may regret that ecclesiastical divisions have impaired the visible unity which should exist among those who share the Christian name, there are some actually within the Church, though they have neglected the initiatory rite, just as there are, alas! so many who have gone through that rite but are almost strangers (no one in a nominally Christian country can be wholly a stranger) to the real spirit and ideal which the Society exists to maintain. There are many degrees of membership in the Christian community. Individuals may be more or less within the Society, just as the Society itself may be more or less Christian. Form and substance may sometimes be separated. A usurper or a tyrant may be crowned, and a lawful king who realises the ideal of kingship may spend a long reign

without a coronation. But symbols, even when they come to us with as much authority behind them as Baptism, should always be talked and thought about in their natural and normal connection with the realities which they symbolise. When so connected, the symbol tends to create the reality. The sacrament is not merely a sign of grace; it tends (in those who rightly use it) to confer grace, for it tends to keep alive the idea of the Church. The idea of the Church of Christ, of the complete change and exacting ideal of life which it demands of us, of the active work for the brethren for which it calls upon us, of the self-denying charity which is its very life,—this idea cannot be too much with us. It is, it has been too little with us. It is quite natural that those who are indifferent to that idea, whose Christianity is wholly of the individualistic type, should be comparatively indifferent to the rite of Baptism. But the idea of the Church can never wholly die out among us, so long as we retain the two simple rites which alone perhaps among distinctively Christian ordinances can be traced back certainly to the practice of the first Apostles, and in all reasonable probability to the practice and example of their Master.

V.

INFANT BAPTISM.

"We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death."—Rom. vi. 4 (A.V.).

V.

INFANT BAPTISM.

THE symbolism of this passage must have come home to St. Paul's readers in a way in which, with our modern usages, it can hardly do to ourselves. St. Paul had before his mind an adult man, making in the presence of the assembled community a confession of his past sins, then plunging beneath the water of the baptismal pool or stream, rising from it and making, doubtless as yet in very few and simple words, a solemn, personal profession of faith in one God, and in His Son Jesus Christ.[1] When we think what Baptism meant to the early Christian, there is no wonder that it should be described as a death no less than as a new life. It was indeed a death to the old heathen life. Not only in the Apostles' time, but all through the first two or three centuries of the Christian era, the man who became a Christian was called upon to renounce to a very large extent the amusements, the society, the occupations, which had

[1] The words put into the mouth of Philip in Acts viii. 37 doubtless represent a very ancient baptismal rite, though they are not part of the original text. For a picturesque account of the baptismal ceremonies in the early Church, see Stanley, *Christian Institutions*, p. 4.

seemed to him hitherto to make life worth living. When the candidate for Baptism, facing towards the west, the quarter of darkness, solemnly and personally renounced the devil and all his works (" I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy works "), and then, after immersion, turned towards the east, the quarter of light, and recited the symbol or creed of his new faith, there could be no doubt whatever about the seriousness of the step he was taking, about the magnitude and the exactingness of the change to which he stood committed. A new life, a new ideal lay before him, marked out by a clear-cut and tyrannical public opinion, enforced by vigilant officers and grave penalties. Old habits of life, old associations had to be given up; sacrifices had to be made, persecution and ridicule had to be encountered to a certainty; the risk had to be faced of penury and torture and death. On the other hand, a new society was ready to receive and welcome and encourage him; a new world opened before him, carrying with it a sure and certain hope of a blessed hereafter, such as was to the religions around him a vague uncertainty and to the philosophers a speculation. To a ceremony intimately connected with such a change, it was natural that such terms as regeneration, or new birth, or illumination should be applied:[1]

[1] The early Church did not so much believe in Regeneration accompanying Baptism as identify the two things. It was a name for Baptism itself, just like that other favourite term—Illumination (φώτισμος), though no one pretends that Baptism, apart from the instruction which in the case of adults accompanied it, by itself conveyed any actual intellectual illumination.

and it is no wonder that in an age much given to mysticism and little given to science, the ideas connected with the reality should gradually transfer themselves insensibly to the bare ceremony taken by itself.

It is a sound remark of Dean Alford's, that wherever Baptism is spoken of in the New Testament, both the sign and the thing signified are really implied—both the act of Baptism and the moral change which normally went with it. In those days the two naturally and almost inevitably went together. Nobody in those days would be baptized who did not mean what Baptism implied. Reception into the new society necessarily involved a great change of life. Modern controversies about Baptism have arisen from the fact that that connection has not always been maintained. And when we look at what Baptism actually was in primitive times and what it is now, we may well ask ourselves whether the Church has done wisely to change this solemn profession of personal self-dedication into a ceremony performed as a matter of course over every unconscious infant.

Of infant Baptism in the New Testament, or in immediately post-apostolic times, there is not a single trace. We hear nothing of it till the latter half of the second century; and then it is a moot point whether children should be baptized and at what age. We find Tertullian suggesting that Baptism had better be postponed at least till an age at which they could understand what they were doing. All through the early Church infant Baptism was the exception

rather than the rule. Well-known Christian saints born of Christian parents were baptized only in middle life. The growing belief in the mechanical certainty of absolute forgiveness at the moment of Baptism—a forgiveness never obtainable afterwards for post-baptismal sin—led men to postpone the rite till the hour of death. From the sermons of Chrysostom, preached in his Cathedral of Constantinople, it is clear that his congregations consisted largely of professedly Christian, but of unbaptized persons. He constantly warns his hearers against such postponement, and draws a vivid picture of the wailing and lamentation which was wont to fill the house when the physician decided that the sick man must be baptized.[1] The decision was looked upon as a sentence of death. It was natural that unless they were prepared to amend their views about the mechanical efficacy of Baptism, the Bishops should exhort in vain. Upon the admitted premisses the layman's logic was right. It was a bad economy to throw away a certain and easy means of salvation, while there was a probability of sinning again. Gradually, however, as the Church modified the severity of its views about post-baptismal sin, the fear of dying unbaptized prevailed over the fear of squandering so precious a gift, and infant Baptism became the general practice of the Church.[2]

[1] Hom. I. in Acta, *ad fin.*

[2] All the early references are collected in Wall's *Infant Baptism*, vol. i. The passages cited from the New Testament and Justin

At first sight we may regret the decay of the old severity,—the necessity for personal conviction and personal profession,—the hard and fast line which it established between a deliberate and a nominal Christianity. And yet reflection will convince us perhaps that the old state of things could not last. It was impossible that as the Church more and more fulfilled its mission, and began, at least in some scanty measure, to conquer the world, the line that separated the Christian Society from the non-Christian world should remain as sharp as it was in the days of persecution. The change inevitably involved, alas! a frightful falling off in the strictness of the Church's rule and of average Christian life, but it was a necessary stage in the doing of the Church's work. And in the altered state of things the postponement of Baptism to a late age would have been an unreality. Baptism means essentially becoming a Christian, becoming a member of the Christian Society. And the child of Christian parents, brought up in a Christian atmosphere, taught from his earliest years the Christian ideal, familiarised from the first with the signs of the Christian faith and the usages of Christian worship, is never really altogether outside the Christian com-

Martyr prove nothing at all. Assuming that the expression "are born again unto God" in Irenæus (contra Hær. ii. c. 39) implies Baptism, this passage would show that children were sometimes baptized, possibly *in articulo mortis*, not that the practice was universal, or even general. From Tertullian (de Bapt. c. 18) and Origen (Hom. xiv. in Luk. ii.), it may likewise be inferred that *parvuli* were often baptized. Tertullian was even in favour of postponement "donec aut nubant aut continentiæ corroborentur."

munity. The change of form corresponds to the change of substance. When the child of nominally Christian parents is brought to the font in infancy, and then is educated in a home which is practically pagan, then, no doubt, the institution is unreal enough. But when practice corresponds in some measure to ideal, the wisdom of the Church's rule can hardly be doubted.

The attitude which we ought to adopt towards the question of infant Baptism really turns upon the view we take of the Church. If we think that the Church was meant to be, and practically can be, a Society entirely composed of mature, advanced, and strenuous Christians, then, no doubt, there is ample justification for the practice of the sect which refuses to baptize till there have been definite signs, or at least a definite personal profession, of conversion and faith. But was the Church only intended for perfected Christians? Is such a view conformable to the ideal of Him who would not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax, who pronounced that those who were not against Him were for Him, who foresaw that the outward and visible society which was growing up around Him must contain tares inextricably mingled with the wheat? Is it not more in accordance with His spirit, with the facts of Christian history, with the constitution and the needs of human nature, to regard the Church as a great educational institution, which includes children as members, *propter spem, non propter rem* (to use an old phrase)—for

hope, not for performance,—members to be gradually educated into a sense of all that is implied by their membership, imperfect Christians to be developed into more perfect Christians; an institution in which the most perfect Christian regards himself as still only a disciple, a learner, undergoing education in the school of Christ.[1] Sophistical attempts have been made to find in the New Testament traces of infant Baptism. It is with a sounder instinct that the Church, in the Baptismal Gospel, has rested its justification not upon any such precarious inferences, but rather upon the words of Christ: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such (that is to say, of little ones, of those who make themselves little by the service of others) is the kingdom of God." The practice of infant Baptism is one of the happiest instances in the history of the Christian Church of what has been called in the political sphere "development by usage,"—a development in perfect harmony with the spirit of its Founder and His Apostles, though it cannot claim the direct authority of either.

I have attempted to justify the practice of infant Baptism, because I think that (though the matter is rarely now discussed) there is in some people's minds an uneasy suspicion that to make much of Baptism (or of any other outward rite of the Church) can only be defended by some crude superstition or some vague,

[1] This argument is forcibly urged in Curteis' Bampton Lectures, *Dissent in its Relation to the Church of England*, Lect. IV.

unintelligible subtlety which they do not really believe. I have tried to show how amply, not merely the practice of Baptism, but the emphasis which is laid upon it, justifies itself from the point of view of reason —on one condition, that we look upon it in its proper place in reference to the whole idea of the Christian Church. To attach importance to Baptism, considered simply as an isolated mechanical act; to suppose that a man who went about, for instance, secretly baptizing heathen children abroad, or neglected infants in London slums, without the knowledge of their parents or anybody else, as the Spanish ruffians in South America baptized the natives before they slaughtered them,—to suppose that such Baptism would confer any real benefit upon the children, would indeed be the basest of superstitions. But look upon Baptism as symbolising, coinciding with, and (from a formal and external point of view) constituting membership of the Christian Society, look at it in its effects upon the mind of the Society which practises the rite, upon the parents and others who bring the child to the font, upon the child who is constantly throughout life reminded of all that was meant by that act; then, if we repeat of infant Baptism the question which we asked last Sunday of the normal adult Baptism in primitive times, Does Baptism confer grace? the answer is not doubtful. If grace be spiritual influence, then certainly infant Baptism is a means of conveying Christian influence.

The altered position of Baptism in modern Christen-

dom reminds us of the change which has taken place in the relations between the Church and the world. In ancient times a Christian was necessarily very sharply marked out from his neighbours by the practice of unusual rites, by abstinence from pursuits and amusements and social customs in which the world around saw no harm at all, by a distinctive way of life, which to the best of those neighbours appeared admirable and almost unattainable, to most of them stupid and offensive, to all peculiar and eccentric. It would be an unreality to say that a true Christian now ought necessarily, in all circumstances and in all surroundings, to be regarded as an eccentric person. It would be extravagant to make the incurring the milder forms of persecution, such as may often now attend a life of real Christian principle, an absolutely necessary test of personal Christianity. Just because to some extent, however imperfectly and intermittently, the Christian Society has for these nineteen centuries been doing its appointed work of advancing the Kingdom of Heaven, the division between Christian and non-Christian is not, cannot be, ought not to be, so clear and sharp as it once was. But still it is well that we should, in a way, look back upon the old days of open warfare and persecution as suggesting the true ideal of the Church. Would that people would think more of imitating the early Church on this practical and moral and social side, instead of imitating it (after all so incompletely and one-sidedly) in some detail of ritual or worship! Would that, when they think

of the early Church, they would have in mind the Church of the first or second century (when dogma was vague and uncertain, but Christian life clear and definite), rather than the Church after Constantine, when the bitterness of the strife had ceased, and the chief note of average Christianity came to be a fiery zeal for orthodoxy! If the Christian life seems easier now, we should ask ourselves anxiously how far it is due to the world having adopted the maxims and the ideal of the Christ, and how far to the Church having adopted the maxims and ideals of the world. We should ask ourselves that question anxiously and personally, in reference to our own particular circumstances. No one can seriously deny that the maxims usually adopted in ordinary political or commercial life, the maxims that are commonly taken for granted in ordinary social intercourse, are not (except in the very elements of Ethics) the maxims which result from the Christian ideal of brotherhood. Every Christian's life ought still to be a struggle and a warfare,—a struggle more and more to substitute in his own life and the life of the society around, in business or professional work, in political and economic arrangements, as well as in the domesticities of private life, the ideal of Christ for the ideal of the world, the ideal of mutual co-operation for the ideal of every one for himself. There must be struggle and effort, in some sense there must be strife and antagonism, in any sincerely Christian life. It would be unreal to insist that in all circumstances the practice of the Christian life

must carry with it habitual or violent collision with our immediately surrounding society. Some of us do live, thank God, in relatively Christian surroundings; for some of us the elementary rules of Christian living are rendered by those surroundings comparatively easy. But if our life is at all times, in all directions, in all relations, an easy thing,—a life without struggle and without sacrifice,—it should make us ask ourselves, not without anxiety, whether it is really after all the Christian life that we are leading, whether it might not be made more Christian, whether we might not be doing something to help the many among rich and poor for whom very simple kinds of Christian profession and Christian living are still very difficult. We can never afford to forget those words which were once said over each of us, and the sign with which we were signed, "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

VI.

GRACE.

"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."—GAL. vi. 18.

VI.

GRACE.

THE word "Grace" is one of those terms which have been so much bandied about in theological controversies, that it has probably for a very large number of Christian people lost nearly all its meaning, and contracted associations which cause it sometimes to be regarded with positive dislike. And yet the idea which it represents occupies so large a place, not merely in the language of technical Theology, but in the teaching of the Apostles themselves, that we shall miss something if we do not make an effort to think what it really means.

The Greek word χαρίς, the Latin *gratia*, means, of course, originally *favour* or *mercy*. For the early Christian it came to denote the effects of the Divine favour—the spiritual gifts which came to them with the knowledge of Christ, or the influence to which they felt those gifts to be due.

It was natural, of course, in the circumstances of the early Christians, that they should confine such a term as a rule to the distinctly Christian gifts of head and heart and character, to that new and marvellous influence which had streamed in upon their own lives

when they accepted the faith of Christ. It was natural that the new Christian word should be used for the new Christian thing—the most wonderful new thing in the spiritual sphere which ever has been introduced into this world of ours. But all the same there is no reason why we should limit the idea of grace to those spiritual influences which come to us directly or indirectly from the work of Christ. It is this hard and fast distinction between the natural or moral virtues and those which are supposed to be producible only by supernatural influence, which tends to make the whole doctrine of Grace sound to many modern ears like some echo of far-off primitive superstition disinterred by modern anthropology. Though I do not know that we could quote a passage from the New Testament in which the virtues of the heathen are distinctly described as gifts of grace, what St. Paul says at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans about the virtues of the heathen world justifies us in claiming his sanction for the assertion that the virtues of the heathen do come from God —still more so the Johannine doctrine of the light that lighteth every man. There is a real and important difference between the Christian character and the best types of character that were known in the heathen and the Jewish world; but that is no reason why we should ascribe the virtues of St. Paul to the grace of God, and the virtues of Socrates (with some fanatical theologians) to the devil, or (with the more compromising) to their own unaided—we

might almost say their own self-created—intelligence. The contrary truth was fully recognised by the more philosophical Greek Fathers, who gladly admitted that in Plato and Zeno, no less than in the old Jewish prophets, the Holy Ghost had spoken. It is partly because of this—because they were comparatively free from that hard and fast distinction between the natural and the supernatural—that the elaborate development of the doctrine of Grace into a cut and dried technical system, the parent of all sorts of unlovely narrowness, has been chiefly left to the Latin Fathers and their medieval and Protestant successors.

There is an article of the Church of England which declares that "works done before the grace of Christ and the Inspiration of his Spirit are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." It is hardly possible to read the words without a shudder, when one thinks of what they probably meant to the Protestant dogmatist who penned them. But no passage in the Articles is more patient of a reasonable and human interpretation. We have only to say (as we can say with perfect truth) that the good works of the heathen could not have been done without some measure of

justifying grace; and the grace of God is always according to the strictest letter of orthodox Theology (even before the coming of Jesus) also the grace of Christ.

There are two directions in which the doctrine of Grace has been narrowed down and abused till it has come to be for so many a mere bugbear—on the one hand in the region of the personal religious life, and on the other in connection with the Sacraments. The doctrine has taken, one might say, a subjective and an objective form. We will look at the subjective side first.

1. It is most true—and it is most important to recognise—that all spiritual insight (we might, of course, say the same of all kinds of knowledge or insight, but we are naturally here mainly concerned with what is moral and religious), every spiritual impulse, every good desire or resolution, comes from God. The belief in the Holy Spirit means nothing at all if it does not mean that. But the mischief begins when people look for the operations of grace just where the work of Reason and of Conscience ends, when they seek to make of Grace a sort of external power, wholly disconnected with the ordinary intellectual and practical life of the man, which comes in from without, and plays upon him (to use the old phrase of the Montanist) as the bow plays upon the lyre; so that in his religious knowledge, in his religious emotion, in his good deeds, he is a mere passive instrument in the hands of an over-

powering influence from the outside. When the man begins to think that he has a knowledge which is independent of thought, that he may despise evidence, contradictions, irrationality, and that every chance whim or impulse of his, all the more if it is opposed to the dictates of common humanity or natural Conscience, is a commanding voice from on high; still more when he takes to despising the truth that is got by patient thought and inquiry, and the goodness that springs from patient and perhaps unemotional efforts to follow Conscience, then it is that the doctrine of Grace becomes an offence to the common-sense understanding, and an obstacle to true piety. It is *in*, not outside, the working of Reason and Conscience and Will, in and through the ordinary social affections and the moral aspirations which are the necessary basis of true religious emotion, that we must see the workings of the Spirit of God. Of course there is no reason why we should not recognise degrees of insight or grace. We need not disparage or deny the special insight or inspiration of a St. Paul or a St. Francis, because we recognise in the most commonplace workings of Conscience, and the most common-sense and unenthusiastic Christian belief, the working of the Spirit of God. If we are really faithful to the doctrine of Grace, there is no *merely* natural knowledge or *merely* natural goodness, and we may equally say on the other hand, no *merely* supernatural knowledge or goodness; though there may well be a

more and a less natural, a more and a less supernatural. At all stages of the spiritual life we must recognise the workings of "that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

2. And then, on the other hand, if we turn to the Sacraments, we get the tendency to treat Grace as something still more wholly outside of and unconnected with the moral, intellectual, and emotional life as it presents itself in ordinary human experience. There is nothing opposed to experience in the idea that material acts will do spiritual work. All the ordinary communication of thought and feeling upon which the higher life of man depends is mediated by the use of language, and words are but symbols. From one point of view Sacraments may be looked upon as simply a particular kind of language. And then again it is a great mistake to think about the Sacraments out of all connection with the Christian community. The whole idea of the Christian Sacraments is missed when they cease to be looked upon as forms in which the social life of the Christian community has clothed itself. And when so regarded they are simply an exemplification of the general truth to which all Science testifies, that the higher life of man—his intellectual and his moral life—are products not of the isolated man but of societies, and that it is by the society that these are transmitted to the individual. Superstition and unreality begin when the act of the priest and of the recipient is isolated from the community of which the priest is

the organ and the recipient a member. When the effect of the Sacrament is isolated from the effect of all that is meant and implied by membership in that community, when the material symbol is isolated from the words and ideas, the prayers and the instructions, the whole religious service of which it forms a part and from which it derives all its meaning,—then begins the corruption which ends (in its extreme forms) in degrading the social sacrament into the magic of the medicine man.

Do Sacraments confer grace, it is asked? Of course they do, if Grace means spiritual influence. Everything which makes a human soul better confers Grace. But if we allow ourselves to speak of Grace as though it were a mysterious, semi-material fluid conveyed about through wholly material channels, then we are in danger of approximating to that magical view of the Sacraments against which the best High Churchmen of the present day have happily begun of late to protest.

What is the real importance of this doctrine of Grace? Is it a matter of no consequence whether we do or do not recognise that all that is best in the human soul comes from God? I do not think so. And to keep alive the doctrine of Grace is one means of keeping alive in us the sense of God, with the spiritual consequences which spring from our belief in God as the source of all things, as the common Father of the human race, as standing in a personal relation to every human being. But there is a more

definite and specific application of that doctrine. I will not now attempt any discussion of the philosophical question of free-will or its bearings upon the doctrine of Grace. Unquestionably there is a sense in which we must assert free-will as an essential part of the Christian, or indeed of any spiritual, view of the world at all. We must assert it at least in the sense that there is such a thing as "self-determination," that men's acts are not the result of purely mechanical forces, of atoms acting on other atoms by external impact, that men's acts, in short, really do spring from their characters. That at least we must admit, however we answer the further question what it is that determines their characters. And undoubtedly the doctrine of Grace has sometimes been pushed to an extent which does endanger this essential truth. But all the same there are, it seems to me, exaggerations of the free-will aspect of morality which are not conducive to a really Christian type of character. The idea that any good I have in me springs from myself and from nobody but myself, that I am entitled to plume myself upon it, that I am entitled to claim merit and reward for it, while all the evil that I cannot but recognise in other men is all their own fault, and therefore disentitles them to any sympathy or assistance from virtuous persons like myself,—that surely is not the Christian attitude of mind. Far more Christian is the exclamation of the Protestant martyr, John Bradford, when he saw a murderer led off to execution, "There, but for the

grace of God, goes John Bradford!" And it is not merely the bare recognition that the good in us comes ultimately from God that is wanted. It is good to recognise the channels through which it comes. It is good to remember more often than we do that it is definitely from other people, from education, from the good influences by which we have been surrounded, in short from the Christian community of the past and of the present, that we derive whatever measure of spiritual life we have in us, whatever opportunities of goodness we enjoy, whether we have used them or whether we have not. And this ought to beget in us also the reflection that the badness of others is due in large measure to the want of such influences, and that for that want we as members of the Christian Society have our measure of responsibility. It should remind us that, whether by personal effort in our immediate environment, or by participation in the works of mercy and beneficence of the whole Christian community, we ought to be trying to become channels of grace to others.

To make more of the Christian community, both by getting Grace from it and by taking part in its work of conferring Grace, is one practical lesson to be drawn from the doctrine which we are considering. And there is another. The Sacraments are called means of Grace. They are not the only means of Grace. But they may serve as the type of others. They may serve to remind us that if we want to become better ourselves we must have some means of

Grace or other. And among these we ought to give due weight to those which have the special authority of Christ or of His Church. Have we felt, again and again it may be, the desire to become better than we are? Have we aspired and resolved, and found that little has come of our aspirations and resolutions? May it be in some measure because we have forgotten that, if we want to make ourselves better, we must use some definite and outward means to that end? We have not asked by what change in our circumstances, by what change in our habits, by what more regular practice of prayer or communion, by what books, by what definite piece of almsgiving, or by undertaking what piece of charitable work, we might become better. For all such means—alike the rites to which we especially give the name of Sacrament and those others to which it is not generally applied—are truly sacramental. They are all means by which the good influences that ultimately spring from God and from Christ, and that are transmitted by the Society which Christ founded, may be brought to bear upon the individual soul and the individual life.

VII.

PRIESTHOOD.

"Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."—1 PET. ii. 5 (R.V.).

VII.

PRIESTHOOD.

ON a previous occasion I tried to make it plain that the great ministerial commissions in the Gospels —the command to preach, to absolve, to baptize, to administer the Eucharist — were (according to the actual text of the Gospels) in the first instance given to the whole Christian Society. It is sometimes supposed that, in order to correct sacerdotal assumption and clerical pretension, it is necessary to belittle the idea of the visible Church. I venture to think that this is a great mistake. The true corrective of an exaggerated or superstitious view of the Christian Ministry is to take a very high view of the Christian Church. And that is certainly the line of thought which is taken in the words of our text. The narrownesses which the writer had to correct are somewhat different from those with which we have to contend in these days, though they sprang doubtless from very much the same infirmities of human nature. He had to try and persuade Jewish Christians that the time had come for the admission of the Gentiles to religious equality with the favoured Jewish nation, and *that* without submitting to the ceremonial law or

taking part in the ceremonial sacrifices which (to the ordinary Jewish apprehension) were the price of their spiritual privileges. And the method he adopts is not to belittle the position of Israel as the chosen people of Jehovah, but to suggest that the old Jewish idea of a chosen people was but a poor analogue or type of the position of the Christian Church—that it was in that purely spiritual but none the less visible and concrete society that there was to be found the real fulfilment of the highest aspirations or predictions of Hebrew prophecy. For him the Christian Church was the spiritual Israel. Nor was the new and Catholic society which was to succeed to the narrow Nation-churches of the ancient world, a society which could dispense with those fundamental institutions of old-world religion—Temple, Priesthood, Sacrifice. The Church itself, the society, was the true temple—the visible, material, local, yet living, habitation (as it were) of Deity. The whole of this society were Priests. And that society of Priests absorbed into itself the religious functions which everywhere in the old world, and especially in ancient Israel, were shared by kings—"a royal priesthood, a holy nation." Nor was the temple without its sacrifice; for the external animal sacrifices of the old ritual were but a faint counterpart of the spiritual worship of the new society, the uplifting of will and heart to God, especially in the great act which the ancient Church called the Eucharist or thanksgiving *par excellence*—itself only a symbol or visible embodiment of the one

real and true sacrifice of the will to God in a holy life.

Now, as in the Apostolic Age, the great antidote to a false Sacerdotalism is the idea of the essential Priesthood of all Christians. It is true that to us this idea does not convey as much meaning as it would to the original readers of this Epistle, surrounded on all sides by altars which still reeked with the blood of victims literally slain by sacerdotal hands. Yet we shall never be able to get rid of false ideas about Priesthood, unless we can make this idea of the Priesthood of all Christians mean something more to us than the mere assertion that in Christianity there are no Priests at all. For this idea of Priesthood does still appeal to the imagination: we must find out what there is in it which is attractive to the highest minds if we would fight successfully against the narrow caricatures and grotesque misapplications to which it is liable. What then is really implied in the idea of a Priest? It is difficult to sum up in a phrase all that is implied in so complex and so shifting a conception; but perhaps we may lay it down that in ordinary usage the three essential ideas connected with Priesthood are—1. Sacrifice or Worship; 2. Mediation; 3. Service.

1. What then does our Epistle mean when it says that all Christians are Priests? I will try to translate what I believe to be the essence of the idea into the plainest possible language. Firstly, then, every Christian is a sacrificer. For all worship—especially the

typical characteristic act of Christian worship called the Eucharist or Holy Communion—is sacrifice, the spiritual reality of which primitive sacrifice was but a crude and coarse adumbration. I have not time now to go fully into this question of the meaning of sacrifice. Suffice it to say that I believe the essential idea of sacrificial worship is communion, not propitiation — the identification of our wills with God's by definite spiritual effort as a means to the identification of the will with God's Will in every act and moment of our lives. And this sacrifice of worship, of which the Christian Eucharist forms the highest act, must be looked upon as the act of the whole Community. Every Christian must take his part in it. It is not a thing that can be done for one man by another, or rather in one sense it is a thing that can and must be done by every man for every other: since every prayer of the Christian is social, offered by him not as an isolated individual but as a member of the community, for the whole community as well as for himself. But worship is not a thing that can be left or abandoned to another. A very obvious lesson, some may think! And yet among those who are ready enough to rail at Sacerdotalism, are there not many who are quite contented to put up with the idea of vicarious worship, to allow their church-going, their Communions, their prayers, to be practically done for them, at best in their presence, or even it may be in their absence, provided only there is reserved to the layman his one sacred right of criticism?

2. The Priest is a mediator. We are taught by the New Testament that all members of the Christian community are mediators. Now, here again, to say that all are mediators is not the same thing as to say that in Christianity there are no mediators. In Christianity there are no mediators, if by mediation is meant the existence of a special order of men without whose assistance access to God is denied to the individual soul—a special order of men without whose leave God cannot be revealed to man, or man approach to God. And yet, nevertheless, it is profoundly true that no man can approach to God except through the help of his fellow-men. It is only by entering into the social consciousness (as it were) that the individual acquires any religious or moral ideas whatever. No one of us would know anything about God or about duty, but for what he learns from his fellow-men. Conscience itself is in a sense the creation of society, though it is none the less true that society is the creation of individual consciences. And it is not merely by teaching that one individual may communicate to another the knowledge of God. Man is a mediator of God to his fellow-men in a higher sense than that. For the highest idea that we can form of God is derived from what we know of man at his best. Thus what we call the mediation of Christ is the supreme instance of a universal principle of the religious life. By showing us Humanity at its highest, Christ has been, and remains, the supreme Mediator between God and man. That Christ is the great High

Priest is the leading idea of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the idea on which the whole argument is based. And it is only through the Christian community that the individual can enter into this knowledge of Christ which is the knowledge of God—only through the tradition of Christian teaching handed down by the community, through the religious life which pervades it, through the ideal which is more or less perfectly realised in its corporate life and in the life of some at least among its individual members. Thus it is no platitude to say that every Christian is bound to be a Priest: for to say that he is a Priest, means that he is bound to take a part in this great task of revealing God to his fellow-men, by word and by deed, by the ideal that he proclaims with his lips and cherishes in his heart and sets forth in his life; by contributing to the creation of a Christian public opinion, and by impressing and (so far as may be) enforcing that opinion upon the whole Society in which he lives, and so taking his part in the Church's fundamental task of binding and loosing. It is of the essence of all true communion with God to diffuse itself to other men. A very different thing this from the cold negation—the Christian can dispense with Priests!

3. There remains the idea of Service. The Priest is one who is bound in a special and peculiar sense to the service of his fellow-men. No doubt this side of Priesthood is a conception so purely ethical that it can hardly be said to be very prominent in the early

and cruder form of Priesthood as it existed in very primitive human societies, except in so far as the Priest was a person who had special powers of doing things for his fellow-man which he could not do for himself — approaching the god, revealing his will, helping men to find their lost property, and so on. But it is found in connection with the Priesthood of all higher religions. And under the influence of Christianity, even when the conception of Priesthood is still largely coloured by the older Jewish, or even the pagan idea of it, the service of one's fellow-men,—general spiritual service, as one may call it, apart from the specialised service of some particular profession or calling,—has come to be more and more an essential element in the idea of priesthood. It is this that makes the ideal of the priestly life attractive to so many of the highest minds. We feel that Sacerdotalism has ceased to be a very formidable or dangerous idea, when the most recent of its more learned champions, Canon Moberly, in his elaborate work on *Ministerial Priesthood*,—amid many things that seem to savour of the old, narrow, mechanical, materialistic view,—tells us that "the inwardness of Priesthood is the spirit of Sacrifice, and the spirit of Sacrifice is the spirit of love."[1] Only, when thus interpreted, it needs no showing that this is a Priesthood to which all Christians are called. The command, "By love serve one another," surely was not addressed to the clergy alone! The New Testament docrine of the universal Priest-

[1] *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 260.

hood of Christians is after all (in its highest meaning) only an assertion of the essence of Christian Ethics, the law of mutual service.

So far, then, all Christians are Priests; for all are bound to take part in Christian Worship; all are bound to be mediators between God and their fellow-men, *i.e.* to reveal God to their fellows by word and life, and to be the means of bringing them to God; all are bound to the law of mutual love or service in spiritual as in other ways. To all these duties every Christian is called; to all these privileges and prerogatives every Christian is entitled. But are they all called to these things in the same way or to precisely the same degree? All are called upon to worship, but not all can conveniently take the same part in worship. Worship requires organisation and leadership; and some of its functions require leisure, training, and other qualifications which are not universal. It is the duty and the privilege of every Christian to reveal God to his fellow-men, to take his part in the religious and moral life of that whole Society whose business it is to bring God to men and men to God. All can, all ought to take some part in this great work; but not all can take the same part. Of course the moral qualities which most fully reveal God to man may be and ought to be exhibited in all relations and functions of human life; but the qualities of heart and head, the particular training and experience required for the communication of religious knowledge, the awakening of consciences, the

calling forth of Christian enthusiasm—these things cannot be possessed by all equally. And still more, even among those who possess these gifts to the highest degree, the actual conditions of human life require many men to be serving the community in ways which prevent them from devoting the bulk of their time to the service of the Christian community in this particular manner. But I need not spend time in defending the principle of a special Christian ministry, which has commended itself at almost all times to the common sense of almost all Christian communities, or I might even say of all Christian communities, for it is only to the idea of a salaried or professional Ministry that the Society of Friends objects. But this idea of a Christian Ministry, when brought into connection with the Universal Priesthood of Christians, really carries with it the idea of a special Priesthood in the sense which ought, I think, to satisfy thoughtful High Churchmen. The idea of the universal Priesthood of Christians is quite compatible with the idea of an Order or Orders of men specially devoted to the exercise in special ways of the functions and prerogatives which are inherent in the whole Christian Society as such. In the Christian Society there can be no vicarious or exclusive Priesthood, but there may be a representative Priesthood.

And it is surely a great, an ennobling, and an inspiring conception—this of an order of men released from the, I will not say worldly or unspiritual, but the less directly spiritual, and for the mass of

men largely mechanical functions in which the necessities of human life require most people to spend the bulk of their time, for the special promotion of those common spiritual purposes for which the Christian Society exists, and in which every Christian, in so far as he is a Christian, is interested up to the level of his capacities and opportunity,—a special order invested with the authority of the whole community, and set apart by them to represent them ceremonially in worship, educationally in teaching, and practically in those general social functions of mercy and charity, of moral elevation and enlightenment, which are the business of no special profession, and in which the voluntary efforts of the general community require guidance and assistance.

We shall never fight successfully against the false Sacerdotalism except by opposing to it a true Sacerdotalism. For every man whose profession or office is anything more to him than a means of making money, it is desirable that he should idealise his own profession, that he should have the highest and liveliest sense of the value and importance of its special contribution to the life of the whole Society. To the Christian Presbyter this is a spiritual necessity. We may safely put as high as we like the privileges, the opportunities, the dignity—nay, in a sense the authority of the Christian Priesthood—if we will only bear in mind two things—(1) that all these prerogatives belong to the Priest only in so far as he succeeds in living up to the ideal of Priesthood transmitted to us by

Christ Himself, only in so far as he actually is all the things that the true Priest ought to be; and (2) that his prerogatives only belong to him as the representative, the delegate, the organ of the whole Christian Society. It is as the representative of the whole Society that he claims the leadership in its worship, that he speaks to men in the name of God and to God in the name of men, that he presides over the corporate activities of the community, that he admits or (if need be) refuses to admit to the Sacrament of Christian initiation and the Sacrament of Christian fellowship.

How far and in what sense the administration of the sacraments or of any other rite is absolutely reserved to the Christian Ministry, and to any particular order in it, is comparatively speaking a minor question, and one which I do not propose to discuss at length to-day. If the view I have taken of the Christian Ministry be the true one, it can scarcely be contended that there is any inherent, necessary, ethical limitation (say) of the power of Ordination to the Bishop or of consecrating the Holy Eucharist to the Presbyter; but to say this of course in no way interferes with the reasonableness of such restrictions as the Church may as a matter of order and discipline have imposed upon the exercise of these functions, with the wisdom of adhering as closely as we can to the traditional polity of the Church, or with the paramount duty of respecting the rules and institutions of the Christian Church at large, and

especially of the particular branch of it to which we belong. In secular matters we have long ago learned to distinguish between the divine right of Kings and the divine right of Government in general. In the Church, too, the speculative admission that some features of an existing Church constitution might possibly be different from what they are, may surely be made without diminishing from the essential principle of the divine authority vested in the Christian Ecclesia, and of the duty of a reverent submission, on the part both of Priest and layman, to the discipline and the institutions which represent the mind of the whole Society.

Possibly this question of the position of the clergy may seem to you a rather speculative matter, without much interest or importance for the ordinary layman. Let me therefore try to give a practical application to what I have been saying.

1. You know how pressing is the question of keeping up the due supply of candidates for holy orders—a due supply in respect of both quantity and quality. And this is quite as much a layman's question as a clergyman's question. Every clergyman was a layman before he was a clergyman; and the willingness of able, sensible, and well-educated men to take orders depends very much upon the estimate of the clerical office or profession which is prevalent among laymen. I would say, therefore, "Do not let the irritation or annoyance which you may sometimes feel at the silly utterances or ex-

travagant sacerdotal assumptions of some foolish clergyman lead you to adopt a disparaging or contemptuous tone towards the clerical office in general." Do not hinder, but rather encourage and help forward a son, or a brother, or a friend who feels any inclination to take upon him the clerical office. There is no age of the world's history in which greater opportunities are open to a liberal-minded clergyman, though it must be confessed there are many obstacles to be overcome and many adversaries to be encountered.

2. We must strive for the restoration of the laity to their true position in the Church. It seems to me that it must be a condition of any effective reform in other ways, that the Church should have its own Assembly—in which, without any interference with the supreme control of Parliament, her system and formularies and rules may be from time to time modified in accordance with the needs of the age, and in which the real mind of the modern, working Church may find expression.[1]

3. But the very last thing I would wish to suggest, as the practical outcome of what I have said, is the idea that you must wait for any

[1] See the admirable volume of *Essays in aid of Church Reform*, edited by Bishop Gore, which contains a learned historical vindication by Mr. Rackham of the ancient right of the laity to take part in all kinds of Church Assembly, even in dealing with matters of doctrine. It is not easy to exaggerate the difference of tone on this subject between the moderate High Church School and the old Tractarians. The prominence of the laity in ancient Church Assemblies is also well brought out by the late Archbishop Benson in his work on *Cyprian, his Life, his Times, his Work.*

change of external machinery before you assert your privilege and exercise your functions as members of the priestly Society of all Christian people. It is a most important part of that function that you should take an interest in the corporate work of the Church, should help it forward by personal work and by money contributions in whatever ways you can. But, as I have tried to suggest, it is not only in that sense that you are called upon to be Priests. The life of Christian Brotherhood may be realised in the work of a profession done heartily and honestly as a service to one's fellow-men, in the charities of private and family life, in the active and energetic discharge of citizen duties. It is in all these spheres, as well as in the activities more closely connected with the visible and organised Christian Society, that the Christian is called upon (each in his own way) to realise his true position as a member of that Christian Church which is essentially a Society of Priests.

VIII.

APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.

"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."—Acts xi. 29, 30.

VIII.

APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.

I TRIED in previous sermons to suggest that the true conception of the Christian Minister is that of representation—that is, one specially set apart for the exercise of functions and prerogatives which are in their essence the functions and prerogatives of the whole Christian Society or *Ecclesia*. Our Lord did not, I tried to show, bequeath to His Church any stereotyped pattern of ecclesiastical government or organisation. But if His Church was to be all that He intended it to be, it was essential, of course, that there should be some government or organisation, and the germs of such a government were no doubt contained in His selection of the Twelve[1] as His immediate companions and instruments in carrying out His great task—the setting up of the Kingdom of God among men. But He did not contemplate any hard and fast, essential or eternal, difference between clergy and laity: it was

[1] It is, of course, possible that "the Twelve" may have been more sharply marked off from other disciples by later tradition than they were in actual fact during the continuance of their Master's own Ministry.

left to the Church herself to develop her own organisation, and to modify it as might be demanded by the changing circumstances of time and place. I propose this morning to glance at the first steps of this development as it took place in actual history, and to see whether it does or does not confirm the conclusion which we have arrived at by an examination of the teaching of our Lord Himself.

I will not ask whether the origin of the Diaconate is or is not to be found in the appointment of the seven Charity Commissioners, with Stephen at their head, to superintend the relief of the widows and orphans. It may be that we have in this episode the origin of the Diaconate, but the Seven are never called Deacons in the New Testament. They may quite as probably have been the first Christian Presbyters, or their office may be regarded as a purely temporary and local institution, which passed away with the further development of the Church's organisation. However that may be, the incident recorded in the words of my text contains the first allusion in Christian history to a distinct Order or College of Elders or Presbyters.[1] They are introduced without any account of their institution or any explanation of their office. And to a Jew such a position would require no explanation. Every

[1] As historical evidence for the existence of Presbyters the allusions in St. Paul's Epistles are of course earlier and more certainly trustworthy, but there is no improbability in the existence of such a body at Jerusalem at this time.

Jewish Synagogue was managed and governed by a body of elders. It would be a matter of course that when the little Christian Society, without deserting altogether the national and mainly ceremonial worship of the Temple, began to have its separate meetings for prayer and reading the Scriptures, for distinctively Christian exhortation and celebration of the distinctively Christian Eucharist, it should organise itself after the manner of a Jewish synagogue. It was just as much a matter of course that a new religious Society should have its Elders, as that a modern Society for a religious or any other purpose should elect a Committee and a Secretary.

To the Jew the term Elder required no explanation. But it was otherwise with the Gentiles. And when St. Paul, on his missionary journeys, began organizing the little Christian communities which he founded, after the model of the Mother Church at Jerusalem, by appointing Elders in every city, a Greek term was wanted to denote the unfamiliar office. This need was served by the word ἐπίσκοπος, Bishop, overseer. The term was used, like the English word Superintendent, to denote a great variety of offices, notably the Treasurers or Wardens of a Temple, or the elected officers of a Guild or Confraternity, whether of a religious or of a purely social character. To the Jew the Christian Church naturally presented itself as a new synagogue; to the Gentile, as a new kind of Guild or Confraternity. It has long been generally admitted by Theologians of all

opinions, that in the New Testament, if the term Bishop and the term Presbyter are not absolutely identical in meaning, they are at least applied to the same persons. It is possible (though I do not know that it is necessary to suppose it) that the term Presbyter was more widely applied than the term Bishop. But, at all events, it is certain that in the New Testament we find a plurality of Bishops, who are also called Presbyters or Elders, in each Church: there is no trace of the single or monarchical Episcopate. Almost the only solid ground for supposing that there was some difference between the usage of the two terms, is that wherever the body of subordinate assistants called Deacons are mentioned, they are associated with Bishops, never with Presbyters; we hear of Bishops and Deacons, never of Presbyters and Deacons: so that it is just possible that at first—though this state of things cannot have lasted long—the vaguer term Presbyter covered both the Bishops and the Deacons.

Thus, when St. Paul sends for the elders of Ephesus to take leave of him at Miletus, he speaks of them as Bishops;[1] in his Epistle to the Philippians he greets the Bishops and Deacons (without any mention of Presbyters). The First Epistle to Timothy contains an elaborate statement of the qualifications of Bishops and Deacons, while later on in the Epistle Presbyters or Elders are mentioned.

[1] Acts xx. 17. This passage, taken by itself, of course favours the absolute identification of Bishops and Presbyters.

Amazing is the contrast when we turn from the pages of the New Testament to the Seven Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, which (since the great work of Bishop Lightfoot) we may assume to be, in their earlier form, of indisputable genuineness, and to belong certainly to the beginning of the second century, possibly to about the year 110 A.D. The letters abound in strong assertions of episcopal authority: "Do nothing without the Bishop." All are to follow the Bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father. "It is good to know God and the Bishop," and so on.

It is likely enough that the ascendancy which we find James the brother of the Lord exercising *de facto* over the Presbyters and Church of Jerusalem, may help to explain the extraordinarily rapid evolution of the presiding Presbyter into something not unlike the Bishop as we know him in later times. And it is tempting to assume that an institution which, at Antioch and in Asia Minor, was fully grown by 110 A.D., must have received the sanction of the Apostles, at least of the Apostle St. John in his old age at Ephesus.[1] But we ought surely to be very careful about unchurching other Churches on the strength of what is, after all, merely a pious presumption. And then there is a very great difference between sanctioning the appointment of a permanent President of the Presbyterial College, and

[1] The grounds on which M. Réville (*Jésus de Nazareth*, i. p. 354) doubts the residence of St. John at Ephesus do not seem very convincing.

saying that such an institution was an essential part of the organisation of any and every Christian Church, or insisting that no Presbyter should be considered to be a Presbyter unless he could trace his descent by laying on of hands, without break or intermission, to a Bishop who was ordained by the Apostles themselves. Of this last notion there is not a trace for some centuries after the time of the Apostles. Moreover, there are two points to be noticed before we can assume that the form of government which we find in the Ignatian Letters,—the hierarchy of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,—however convenient, venerable, and desirable, is absolutely binding on the Church of all times.

1. In the first place, we have but a very incomplete picture of the Apostolic Church when we treat its Ministry as consisting of the Apostles themselves, the Presbyter-Bishops, and the Deacons. We hear of several other offices or functions in the early Church besides these three—those of the Evangelist (the office apparently held by Timothy at Ephesus), the Prophet, and the Teacher. Even if we identify the "Teachers" with the Presbyters, we still have the Evangelists, and above all the Prophets. If you read carefully the New Testament Epistles, and that very early Christian writing known as the Didaché or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," you will see that the Prophets were by far the most prominent and important order of the Christian Ministry in Apostolic and sub-Apostolic times. They are usually mentioned next

to Apostles.[1] It was the Prophets with the Teachers who laid hands on St. Paul at Antioch when he started on his mission to the Gentiles.[2] They were the Missionaries who went about devoting the bulk of their time to the preaching of Christianity; the Bishops constituted a local committee, whose primary business was government, discipline, management of Church funds, rather than the conduct of worship and religious teaching, though they certainly performed these last functions in the absence of an Apostle or Prophet. But when the Prophet appears, the mere Bishop gives way. The Prophet is to receive tithes, but not so the Bishop. It is thought a compliment to say that the Bishop too does in his way perform the functions of the Prophet. The "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" contains a very beautiful form of prayer intended to be used by the less gifted Bishop in consecrating the Holy Eucharist; but it is assumed that the Prophet, who could pray extempore, will need no such assistance. When the Prophet is present, he and not the Presbyter celebrates, and he is to be allowed to "eucharise" or give thanks at whatever length he pleases.[3]

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iii. 5, iv. 11. Cf. Acts xi. 27, xv. 32, xxi. 10.

[2] Acts xiii. 1.

[3] *τοῖς δὲ προφήταις ἐπιτρέπετε εὐχαριστεῖν ὅσα θέλουσιν*, Didache 10. The date of the Didaché or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" is disputed. By Bishop Lightfoot it was placed at the end of the first century. Many critics, disliking the light which it throws upon the original organisation of the Church rule, put it as late as possible; but a later date will do little to discredit its value as evidence for

Thus, even if we accepted the Apostolic origin of the Presbyterate and the Episcopate, we should have to admit that the Church has widely departed from the Apostolic organisation. If a Church which has got rid of Prophets may remain a true Church of Christ, so may a Church which has got rid of Bishops.

2. And then, secondly, it is to be observed that the rapidity with which the monarchical Episcopate developed itself was very different in different parts of the world. In Syria and in Asia Minor the development was rapid; in Rome and the West less rapid; in Greece more gradual still. Side by side with the fully episcopal Churches like Antioch and Ephesus, there long continued to exist what we may call semi-episcopal Churches—notably the Church of Rome, where a presiding Presbyter had a fairly prominent position but no distinctive name; and wholly Presbyterian Churches like Corinth and Philippi. In Polycarp's letter to Philippi, we hear much of Presbyters and Deacons, not a word about a single Bishop: nor again, in the letter of Clement, himself presiding Presbyter of Rome, to the Corinthians, the main object of which is to enforce respect for the authority of the Elders. And yet he must have mentioned a Bishop had there been one. Episcopacy would have been the very remedy for the disorders which he

the earliest post-Apostolic age, since the state of things which it reveals can in that case only be explained as a local survival of much earlier conditions.

rebukes. Thus, long after the time of the Apostles, we see episcopal and non-episcopal communities existing side by side, yet each recognising the other as true Churches of Christ, intercommunicating with each other without the slightest suggestion that a non-episcopal body, however great the practical desirability of a single head, lacked any essential note of a true Christian Church. Doubtless the development of the Episcopate has had a great and beneficent effect in strengthening Church order and discipline, promoting and keeping up historical and doctrinal continuity, facilitating communication and union between isolated Christian communities, and so on. Yet, after all, in face of these facts, can we regard it as anything but an ecclesiastical institution? Dare we say that a Church ceases to be a Church because, like the Church of Scotland or the Protestant Churches of the Continent, it has chosen to revert to the simpler organisation of Apostolic or post-Apostolic times?

That we cannot trace a distinct order of Bishops right back without interruption to the time of the Apostles in all parts of the Christian world, is now generally admitted by scholarly theologians. And if Episcopacy was not regarded as essential by the Apostles and their contemporaries, by what right can we deny that unepiscopal bodies may be true Churches or their Presbyters true Presbyters?

But there are two ways of evading the natural inference from the admitted historical facts. (1) It may be asserted that the first Presbyter-Bishops

ordained by the Apostles were not what we call Presbyters, but what we call Bishops, — that the first recipients of ordination at the Apostles' hands received a full commission to exercise all the functions of the Ministry, but that afterwards a distinction was made. One man received the whole ministerial commission, including the power of ordaining; while others were simply ordained Presbyters without this supreme right, so that the principle of the Apostolical Succession was still kept up,—the principle that spiritual authority comes not from below but from above, that no man may exercise any ecclesiastical function without having received authority to do so from one who had in like manner received it from one who could trace back his own ordaining power to the Apostles themselves.[1] To this I would say that the theory is at variance with all the facts as far as we know them. It was not the individual Presbyter but the whole College which exercised the authority of the later Bishop—including the power of ordaining. The theory implies, further, that at a definite moment it was decided to ordain no more Presbyter-Bishops, but only one Bishop and a number of Presbyters, whereas the historical facts make it plain that Presbyters passed into Episcopacy by a gradual and probably almost unconscious evolution, and not at any one definite moment. In all probability it was not till long after the establishment

[1] This is the suggestion of Bishop Gore, *The Church and the Ministry* (1889), p. 334.

of Episcopacy that the newly-elected Bishop, if already a Presbyter, received any fresh ordination by laying on of hands. And to the last there were many traces left of the original position of the Bishop as merely *primus inter pares*. To this day, in the whole Western Church—the Church of Rome as well as the Church of England — all the Priests present unite with the Bishop in laying hands upon the candidate for Priest's orders; and it is not generally known that by the Canons of the Church of England a Bishop is positively forbidden to ordain without the assistance of at least three Presbyters, who are to assist in the examination of the candidates as well as take part in the ritual act of Ordination.[1]

(2) Another way of evading the consequences of the admitted results of modern research as to the development of the Episcopate, is to say that, though originally Episcopacy was not necessary in the time of the Apostles, it has become necessary, become a part of the *jure divino* ecclesiastical organisation by the authority of the Church. But if all actual spiritual developments of Church organisation acquire in time ecumenical validity, so that no single national Church can ever give up what the general consensus of Christendom has once accepted, what becomes of our own case against the claims of the Papacy? Or, if we plead that the supremacy of Rome was never accepted by the Greeks, then how can we do without the sub-diaconate, which was at one time quite as universal a feature of

[1] Canon xxxv. (1603).

Church organisation as the Episcopate? However strongly we may regret that some of the Churches at the Reformation should have been obliged by circumstances, or thought themselves obliged, to abandon Episcopacy, how can we dare to proclaim that these Churches are no Churches, when they possess exactly the same order which the Church of Corinth possessed when it was organised by St. Paul, and when it received the recognition and approval of Clement, Bishop of Rome?

It is not often well to speak from the pulpit about such highly controversial matters. But this question of the Apostolical Succession has after all some practical bearings, and I have chosen to speak of it this morning for three reasons:

1. It is just because that idea of the Church, which the Oxford movement has restored to its due prominence in the thoughts of Christians, is absolutely essential to a due understanding of Christianity—because it is an absolutely essential element of Christian Morality in its most severely practical applications—that I do regard it as a matter of really pressing, practical, spiritual importance to disconnect a high appreciation of the claims of the Christian Church, and of the clergy as the officers and organs of the whole Christian Society, from those mechanical ideas of God's dealings with men which are fostered by the doctrine that the Apostolic Succession is of absolute necessity to the existence of a true Church of Christ.

2. This matter is of real practical importance,

because it affects our duty as individuals, and the duty of the Church to which we belong, towards other Churches and their individual members. I believe that the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession is one which it is right to preach against, because it is an obstacle to Christian Unity and Christian Charity. I do not mean to say that individuals who hold this doctrine, and the notions that are founded on it, are necessarily wanting in personal charity towards the members and Ministers of non-episcopal Churches. Happily there may be much unity and co-operation among Christians without formal ecclesiastical recognition and intercommunion. But surely it cannot be denied that ecclesiastical divisions do promote breaches of Christian charity, that the prevalence of this doctrine among us is one great cause of the hostility of Nonconformists to our Church, and that it hinders friendly intercourse with the Scotch and foreign Protestant Churches. We ought not surely to commit ourselves to a doctrine which has these results unless we are very certain of our ground. Is it not enough to say with Hooker that Episcopacy—if only on the ground of precedent, tradition, and historical continuity—is of the "well-being" of the Church, without belonging to its "being"? We may value Episcopacy as connecting us with the past, and with the episcopal Churches of East and West, without allowing its absence to separate us from Churches with which we have really so much more in common. May we not be content with being as High Church-

men as Bishop Cosin, and other seventeenth-century divines, who had no scruples about communicating with the unepiscopal Churches of the Continent?

3. There is yet another way in which this matter has a practical bearing. We rightly at the present day feel a disinclination for theological controversy. We feel a reluctance to attack or even to proclaim very openly our dissent from the cherished beliefs of our fellow-Churchmen. We feel (if we may adapt a saying of St. Paul's) that "controversy puffeth up, but love edifieth." Now, on the whole this spirit represents a real growth of Christian feeling. But is it not just possible that this dislike of controversy, which characterises so many of our moderate Churchmen, may be pushed to a point at which the paramount claims of truth are altogether forgotten? Reverence for truth is after all a moral matter; it is an essential part of the Christian character. It is morally wrong to go on asserting doctrines which we have no ground for believing to be true. There are times when it is a duty to refuse—even by silent acquiescence—to encourage the growth of what seem to us false and groundless opinions on matters of religion, even where they seem to have little direct bearing upon individual life and conduct. And that is especially so when the opinion is one which is apt (to say the least of it) to encourage unworthy views of the divine character, and a poor, mechanical, materialistic conception of that moral or mystical union between God and His Church which is so essential an element in the

Christian creed. Most of all should we seek to clear our minds of theories which (if they are true) require us to put outside the pale of the Christian Church large numbers of persons whom we should otherwise regard not merely as fellow-Christians, but as fellow-Churchmen, and large societies of Christians whom we should otherwise be able to consider as branches, it may be more or less erring branches, it may be imperfectly organised branches, it may be in some cases unnecessarily separated or schismatical branches, but still as true and living branches of the one Church which is in union with Christ her Head.

IX.

THE SOCIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?").—1 Tim. iii. 2–5.

IX.

THE SOCIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

ST. PAUL[1] is here describing the qualifications of the Presbyter-Bishops of the early Church. He is writing at a time when the single Bishop has not yet emerged out of the ancient College of Presbyters, and when the members of this College were known indifferently by the name of Presbyters (elders) or Bishops (overseers).[2] I want this morning to direct your attention to a single point in this catalogue of episcopal or priestly qualifications. The qualifications insisted upon seem to be chiefly those required for ruling and for the administration of Church funds, rather than for preaching, or leadership in worship, or the performance of ritual acts. The work of preaching—at least in that form of it which was called in the early Church Prophecy—was the task

[1] The objections which have been urged against the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles are far more substantial than those raised against other of the Pauline Epistles; but they do not appear to me to be conclusive. There is perhaps a balance of critical opinion against them; but many writers who deny the genuineness of the Epistles as they stand, admit that they embody fragments of genuinely Pauline letters. They are here used merely as supplying a picture of Church life at a very early period.

[2] See, however, above, p. 112.

of the Prophets—that is, probably of all who were recognised as possessing the gift of the Spirit.

The Presbyters were already beginning at least to share the function of teaching, and no doubt in the absence of a recognised Prophet presided at the celebration of the Eucharist and other worship of the community.[1] But the primary business of the Presbyters was ruling and administration of funds. They were the office-bearers of the Society, elected by the whole community, and constantly, no doubt, acting under its general guidance and direction. But still theirs was the primary responsibility for enforcing the discipline of the Society — for admitting new members by Baptism after due preparation and probation, for conducting communications with other Churches and offering hospitality to their envoys or other travelling Christians, for administering the charitable funds of the Society with the assistance of the Deacons. The Christian Ecclesia or Church in those days was much more than a Society of men professing the same theological opinions and meeting once a week to listen to a preacher who shared those opinions: nobody could possibly in those days have made that mistake about it. Faith in Jesus Christ as the supreme Revealer of the One God was the source of all its inspiration and the basis of its corporate unity; worship and participation in the sacrament of brotherhood were the great sustainers of that inspiration and that unity. But the Church was primarily

[1] See above, p. 115, note.

a society for the practice of the Christian life. It formed a compact, organised, highly-disciplined Society for the maintenance of Christian rules of life among its members, and in its corporate capacity it sought to put into force its supreme principle of brotherhood by collecting large sums of money and applying them to the relief of widows and orphans, sick and aged. A casual observer would have been more likely to make the mistake of seeing in the Christian Church nothing but a huge charitable guild or Mutual Assurance Society, than the opposite mistake of seeing in it nothing but a new school of opinion or a new ritual cult. It is well known that the Christian Churches obtained their first recognition as legal corporations in their capacity of Burial Clubs.

And this feature of the Christian Society was no mere accident—no mere temporary phase of its existence—due to its position as a society of believers in an alien cult surrounded by a hostile pagan world. It was a necessary element in the working out of its Founder's fundamental ideas. Without some such organisation, His conception of what His followers were to be could not have been carried out. They were to be a society of men who believed in, and were striving to realise, the principle of human brotherhood —the principle that there is an essential value in every human soul and every human life. In other words, the Christian Church was a society for bringing about the coming of the Kingdom of God, for the

realisation among men of a certain ideal of social life, and for the diffusion of that ideal throughout the world. True, the Kingdom of God was not meat and drink. It was not primarily concerned with the satisfaction of bodily wants or the promotion of animal enjoyment; but it was and is very much concerned with social justice and equity. Treating another man as a brother means, no doubt, a great deal more than giving him enough to eat and drink; but it does mean trying—so far as the complexities and the imperfections of human society will allow—to bring about a state of things in which no one shall be without meat and drink except through his own fault. The Kingdom of God and His righteousness must be the first thing. But a society in which everyone did really seek *first* the Kingdom of His righteousness would necessarily be a society in which the other things—the things necessary to the lower life—would be added to them. Nobody could perish for hunger, or be compelled to labour for an inadequate wage, or die in a cheerless workhouse, if every one of us really did regard his neighbour's good as no less important than his own. As to what social justice really is, as to what is the ideal of a human society in its economic and industrial aspects, and still more as to how that ideal should be brought about, there is room for the widest differences of opinion among Christian people. Among all sensible Christians, it is, of course, recognised that Society can only advance to this ideal by slow and gradual stages, and

that in the process to it many social arrangements which are in themselves harsh and unjust, un-Christian and undesirable, must be put up with for fear of worse evils. But no one can have, as it appears to me, a true conception of the nature of the Christian Church who does not recognise as an essential part this its social mission.

Those who are most disposed to limit the province of the Church and of the clergy to purely spiritual matters, will surely admit that to give to all whom one employs that which is just and equal is the most elementary principle of personal Christian morality; and yet nobody can really in these days decide what it is just and equal to give to those who serve us, or how it is possible to secure it to them, without facing great social problems, and taking his part, so far as his opportunities go, in bringing about a solution of them.

The inadequate recognition of this social side of the Church's work was one of the weak points of the Oxford movement. The individualism of its parent Evangelicalism still clave to it. Its leaders did indeed recognise the importance of the Christian Society as the instrument of individual salvation. But they still looked upon the Church too exclusively as the preserver of a dogmatic tradition, the guide of individual souls, the dispenser of the sacraments by which the individual religious life was sustained. Their great work was the revival of the devotional life, and of practical Christianity in its application to individual conduct. In their conception of individual conduct

the duty of giving alms to the poor, of course, occupied a prominent place. The writings of Dr. Pusey, for instance, are full of strong things about the perilousness of riches and the duty of Almsgiving; and it is needless to say how splendidly he practised what he preached. But, speaking generally, the minds of the Oxford leaders were too much pre-occupied with the interests of dogma and of devotion to think very much about the application of Christian principles to large questions of social or national policy. To call attention to this side of the Church's duty has been the work in part of the group of men of whom Maurice was the centre; and in part of the much-despised Nonconformist Conscience, which, though never tired of proclaiming its dogmatic objection to the interference of the State in spiritual matters, has seldom failed in practice (when it could do so without encouraging the accursed institution of an Established Church) to prove nobly inconsistent with its own theory, and to contend for the application of Christian principles to questions of politics and national life. This aspect of the Church's work is now beginning — though only just beginning — to secure general recognition in all Churches, in all schools, among Christian men of all politics, and not least among the spiritual descendants of the Oxford Tractarians. The greatest hope that one can see of theological peace and a better practical understanding in the future among men of different ecclesiastical views lies, I think, in the increasing recognition of

the principle that the primary and most important business of the Church is not the definition of dogma or the practice of a cult, but the application of the fundamental ideas of Christ, not only to individual conduct, but to the public life of a Christian Society.

The ways and means by which the Christian Society may bring its influence to bear on practical life must, of course, vary with the circumstances of time and place. Unquestionably an enormous change has been introduced into the relations between the Church and the surrounding society through the nominal—though it be but nominal—acceptance of Christianity by the bulk of the community. Many functions which were once discharged by the Christian body through its official organisation—the work of education, the relief of the poor, the care of the aged, and so on—may often now be best discharged by the State, or be left to private societies not officially and organically connected with any particular religious body. The Church never does its work better than when it can communicate its spirit to the action of the State, and get its rules of life—its charity to the aged poor, or its condemnation of dishonest trade—embodied in the legislation of a Christian country. But then, on the other hand, a Christian Society of the present day ought to aim at many things which it was simply impossible to attempt when the Christian community was a mere despised section of a pagan and despotically governed empire. Then it could do little but relieve distress when it had arisen, and alleviate some

of the evils due to the defective social organisation of the time. Now, surely, it is the duty of Christians not merely to relieve sickness, but to prevent sickness. It is mere hypocrisy for a society of men to recognise as a Christian duty the relief of the typhoid-smitten poor, and to treat the consideration of drainage and sanitation by which fever may be prevented as a purely secular affair, with which neither the Christian Society nor the individual Christian as such has anything whatever to do. And it is not merely to sickness, but to unmerited poverty that we ought to apply the simple principle that prevention is better than cure. It is not merely Philanthropy, but Justice, that it is the Church's social mission to preach,—Justice as between class and class, between employer and employed, between rich and poor. What social justice is, it is a hard thing to say; how to bring it about is a still harder, a still more appalling problem. Almost any conceivable attitude towards these questions might, upon certain views about matters of fact or about the actual constitution of human nature, be justified on Christian principles—except one, and that is the attitude of indifference. The one intolerable attitude for a Christian to take up is the view that a Christian is not his brother's keeper: that there is a hard and fast line between the Christian life and the life of trade or business, of social reform or political progress: that Christianity is concerned with purely spiritual matters, and that questions of Justice, forsooth, are not spiritual matters!

How to apply these general principles to the concrete difficulties of the individual life is too wide a matter for me to enter upon now. I must be content to glance at a few illustrations of the way in which we ought to obey them, and to apply them to the conduct of our own lives.

1. These principles as to the real nature and aims of the Church of Christ should supply us with the ever-needed reminder as to the duty of wise and thoughtful Almsgiving. Almsgiving is no cure for social disorders; but much evil can be alleviated and prevented by wise liberality. And there is no form of social improvement—however unconnected with the direct relief of want or suffering—which can get on without money. We have seen that the collection of money was one of the most prominent functions of the primitive Church. Giving must still be regarded as one of the most obvious, the most elementary duties of the individual Christian man or woman. And it is clear that this duty of thoughtful Almsgiving cannot be properly fulfilled unless there is also a thoughtful regulation of personal expenditure. The duty of Almsgiving cannot begin just when we have expended the very maximum that we have a mind to spend upon our own enjoyment. We cannot quiet the conscience after the fashion of the Casuists attacked by Pascal, who contended that it is only our duty to give alms of our superfluities, and that to persons of quality no income could be pronounced superfluous. There is a real—terribly real—meaning in that much abused phrase,

"necessities of one's position." But this much at least should be clear, that living up to the necessities of our position (in any sense in which a Christian can recognise such necessities) must not be confounded with living up to our means.

2. I need hardly say how much more valuable than any money gift as a contribution to this work of promoting the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the essential work of the Christian Church, is any kind of personal service. With many, no doubt, at least for part of their lives, there is room for little voluntary service of the brethren outside professional work (which, of course, may none the less be made into service of the Christian brotherhood), except in the form of alms or of personal kindness to individuals. And among those voluntary services which do constitute a most positive Christian duty in those who have much leisure, we ought to include a great deal more than what is commonly called religious or charitable work. There are a great many other ways of serving the poor besides going to visit them in their houses. There is nothing, for instance, that wants more impressing upon Christian consciences at the present moment, perhaps, than the importance of personal service in the work of local government. Fifty men of common honesty, good education, and ordinary business capacity, applying themselves with real enthusiasm to the work of the Vestries or of the bodies which are to succeed to them in the poorer parts of London, with the single-minded desire to make the lives of the poor tolerable, would

probably effect a more real and palpable social reform than all the London Government Bills that the wisest and most paternal of governments is likely to give us for a very long time to come.

3. And on the part of all, even on the part of those who can take little personal share either in charitable effort or in legislative and administrative work, I venture to say that it is a duty to take an interest in those wider social questions which the Christian spirit has somehow got to solve. It is a duty to think about them, to read about them, and to contribute (so far as we can) to the formation of a Christian public opinion about them. A strong, an intolerant Christian public opinion is the modern equivalent of the ancient ecclesiastical discipline. And then, of course, so far as we can arrive at any definite opinions on the matter, we must apply them to our individual lives,—in buying and selling, employing labour, investing money, and the like. To take a single instance of what I mean, we can, if we will take the trouble to do so (though it is often difficult), find out something about the way in which the things we wear are made, and about the lives of the people who make and sell them. And we can then take steps to secure that we at least shall not become accomplices in that process of sweating which in the abstract we are most of us ready enough to condemn. We can at least make a practice of dealing ourselves with those who treat their employees best.

Let me just try to sum up once more the idea on

which I wish to insist. The Christian Church is not merely a Society for public prayer and private edification. It is an organised Society whose ultimate aim is to bring about that ideal state of human life which our Lord called the Kingdom of Heaven. We need not ask whether the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven is near at hand or far off, or how nearly we shall ever be able to approximate in actual human life to that divine ideal. But the duty of Christians is plain,—not as isolated individuals each seeking his own salvation, but as members of an ideal Society which is as it were ever struggling to find a more and more perfect expression in an actual visible Church,—to strive towards the mark of social salvation. "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus." There is no salvation outside the Church. This is a narrow and intolerant dogma if understood literally of doctrinal allegiance or ecclesiastical conformity, but it represents at least this eternal truth, that the individual's salvation lies in contributing to social salvation, in identifying himself with his community, and in endeavouring, by some one or other of the immensely diverse kinds of social service, to turn it into a Kingdom of God.

X.

THE MATTER OF PRAYER.

"After this manner therefore pray ye."—MATT. vi. 9.

X.

THE MATTER OF PRAYER.

IN thinking about Prayer, we are in truth thinking about the most vital matter in all religion. In asking whether a particular form of belief can give any rational meaning to prayer, we are virtually asking what are its claims to be considered a religion at all. The character of a religion, and the influence it exercises over its adherents, is determined more than anything else by the kind of prayer which it encourages. And the question whether a particular individual can be called a religious man depends in no small degree upon the question whether he prays, and what sort of prayers it is that he prays. It has generally been recognised that in the Lord's Prayer we are presented not so much with a particular form of prayer, as with a model for all prayer. That prayer was given to the disciples in answer to the appeal, "Teach us to pray." If we want to learn what is the Christian way of praying, we must ask in what respects Christian prayer, as illustrated by the Lord's Prayer, differs from those long prayers and vain repetitions against which our Lord had just been warning His disciples. And for to-day let us take

for our consideration *one* of these distinguishing characteristics of the Lord's Prayer—the things prayed for.

The *matter* of Prayer—let that be our subject for this morning. In the first place, let it be noted that before we begin to ask for anything we are invited simply to think of God, to think of Him as our Father. That word Father strikes the keynote of the whole. If God is our Father, He must give us all that we really need,—all that is really good for us, in so far as the nature of things makes that possible. And therefore we are prepared to find that only one petition is for any material good thing—the simple request, "Give us this day our daily bread." As to all material goods, our Lord had just been reminding His disciples that our Heavenly Father knows that we have need of such things before we ask Him. That is true, of course, of spiritual blessings also; but then with regard to spiritual blessings, the prayer has a direct tendency to fit us to receive them. There are things (we may surely say) which it is not possible for God to give us without prayer, and that is not the case with regard to material good things. The Lord's Prayer was not given us to make us think much about such things, about satisfying our natural wants, still less about gratifying our worldly desires and selfish ambitions. Those are just the things of which we are naturally inclined to think too much already. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." Heathen prayer was often merely a means

of getting things which the person happened to want. There is nothing spiritual in that. Christian prayer is intended to raise our minds above such things, to make us think about the things that we are naturally inclined to think too little about; about the diffusion of reverence for God's name—that is to say, reverence for His character and for all that is in accordance with His will; about the coming of His kingdom—that is to say, the moulding of all human society into accord with its divine ideal, the putting down of all social injustices and tyrannies, of war between nation and nation, class and class, man and man, the bringing about a state of things in which all men shall pursue the common good and treat one another as brothers. For that is what is really meant by "Thy kingdom come." When we pray that prayer, we are not praying for the end of the world, or praying that we may go to heaven when we die. We are praying, as the next clause of the prayer explains, that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All these non-selfish petitions we offer first, before we come to our own individual needs at all. And then after the simple prayer for daily bread, an act of faith in the providence of God, we go on to pray for our own spiritual needs—for the forgiveness of sins, for deliverance from evil. Those are the things of which we are naturally inclined to think too little; those are the things, therefore, that we have most need to be urged to pray for.

There is, then, very little in the Lord's Prayer to encourage prayer for definite and particular temporal good things for ourselves or for others. May we not go even further than this? May we not say that that clause, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," as interpreted in the light of modern science, positively forbids many kinds of prayer that are still not wholly unknown among us? The whole tone and spirit of our Lord's teaching about prayer may surely be summed up in those well-known words of an old English divine, who tells us that prayer is the bringing of our wills into conformity with God's will, not the effort to bring God's will into conformity with ours. Where, therefore, the will of God is sufficiently revealed to us, we ought not to pray for anything that runs counter to it. Now we do know that it is God's will to govern the physical universe by general laws. Why God should govern the world by general laws which often bring with them so much that seems to us harmful and unjust, I for one do not profess to know. Believing that Nature (as the great German thinker Lotze puts it) is simply a name for an effect whose cause is God, I cannot profess to see any *a priori* necessity for the government of the world by general laws, if by law is meant simply a uniform sequence of phenomena. If the word law means merely uniformity, I cannot pretend to understand that enthusiasm for the idea of "law" which fills the souls of so many people at the present day. The course of nature might very well be uniform and

yet uniformly bad. The will might be governed by law, and yet be a huge infernal machine. If "law" means a rational and intelligible principle, that is another matter; but a rational principle of action does not necessarily involve a mechanically uniform sequence of events. We cannot, then (as it seems to me), see any *necessity* for this uniformity of nature understood in its ordinary scientific sense. We do not know why nature is uniform. Still, it is obvious that the natural world is as a matter of fact governed by general laws (that is assumed in every scientific inference); and if we believe in God, we must believe that if nature does work by uniform laws, it is because it is best that it should so work. Now I suppose that few among us do seriously doubt that God does govern the world by general laws. And if that is God's will, if our knowledge of nature is sufficient to make us sure that that is God's will, we have no right to pray for exceptions to the general course of nature. Where this uniformity in the course of nature is sufficiently obvious even to the unscientific observer, nobody ever does think it right to pray against it. No modern Christian thinks it right to pray that the sun should stand still, or that it should rise earlier in the winter months to save the poor the expense of candlelight. Even where the purpose of such an exception is one which, judged by our limited and imperfect knowledge, might seem most certainly in accordance with the demands of justice or humanity, we do not think it right to pray for

miracles of this sort. We do not think it right to pray that our missionaries should be able to speak foreign languages without having to learn them. And we now know what the wisest men did not always know, that the apparent irregularities of the weather are just as much due to fixed and ascertainable general laws as the rising of the sun or the course of the tides, though our knowledge of those laws and our powers of observation are not sufficient to enable us to predict changes in the weather with as much accuracy as we can secure in calculating the motions of the heavenly bodies. In condemning, therefore, prayers for fair weather and the like, we are simply carrying out the teaching of the Lord's own Prayer as interpreted in the light of science, which, so long as it is understood as a mere statement of what actually does happen, is no less a revelation of God's will than the teaching of our Lord Himself. If we pray such prayers as these, we are really doing what Christ Himself treated as a temptation of the devil—commanding that stones be made bread.

But it may be asked, does not the same objection apply to prayer for spiritual blessings? Surely nothing can be more unreasonable than such a suggestion. All that we know of the physical world leads us to believe that God works in it by physical causes, and that sunrise and sunset, wind and wave, tide and tempest, are not modified or affected by any desires or prayers of ours. All that we know of the spiritual world, on the other hand, leads us

to believe that here prayer does cause effects. All experience is against the one kind of prayer; all experience is in favour of the other. I do not believe that anyone has ever prayed in earnest without having experienced to some extent the effects of prayer in himself. Do we not rise from all earnest and serious prayer with a stronger sense of God's presence, a deeper realisation of His will for us, more strenuous resolutions to do it? And do we not find that (though, of course, even the sincerest prayer cannot be expected altogether to neutralise the evil tendencies of our nature) we do become stronger also to do as we have prayed? That prayer does influence character and life is one of the most certain results of spiritual experience. If, unhappily, we have no experience of our own to appeal to on this matter, then let us trust the unanimous experience of others. There is no subject connected with the spiritual life on which we can appeal to so large a weight of testimony. Here, for once, there is no difference of opinion among Churches or schools of thought, nor need our appeal even stop with the limits of Christendom. All the higher religions of the world are so much evidence in favour of the spiritual efficacy of prayer.

And here, perhaps, some of my readers will probably want me to say whether it is a special interposition of the Divine Will that we believe in, or whether the answer to the prayer is to be looked upon as the natural result of the prayer. Such a

question involves, I venture to say, a wholly false antithesis. It implies a forgetfulness of the fact that laws of nature are, for the Christian, simply the way in which God acts. That is so even with physical laws, which are the expression of God's will, though in that region we cannot always see what is the ultimate end or purpose of the divine action. Still more clearly must the laws of our spiritual nature be regarded as simply a statement of the way in which God acts upon the human soul. In prayer, if there be a God at all, the human spirit is in direct and immediate contact with the Divine Spirit: the effect that the prayer produces *is* the divine action. In proportion as in prayer we are putting ourselves into conformity with God's will, we are in communion with Him; and in that same proportion the prayer will produce its effect —more or less effect, no doubt, in proportion to the intensity of the effort and the general character of the man. But some effect such prayer must needs produce. It is natural, in view of the mechanical and impersonal associations of the term "law," that people should rather shrink from applying it to that mode of the divine action which we rightly look upon as most spiritual and most personal. It is quite right that we should think of God's action as personal; but that other way of putting the matter—saying that it is a law of the spiritual nature that prayer should be answered—has the advantage of excluding the idea of capricious, irrational

action, of an arbitrary favouritism (if we may so speak) in God's dealings with man. We are right in feeling that God does hear and answer the faithful prayers of individual souls; only we must remember also that the prayer is not answered without reference to the general plan of God's government. Christians have always been taught that their prayers will only be answered in so far as they are in accordance with the ultimate purpose of God for the future of that individual soul, and, as we ought to add, of all the other souls who are equally the objects of His love.

It may be said, of course, that prayer of this kind might be possible for those who have no faith in God at all. I for one would not in any way throw ridicule or contempt upon the Agnostic's earnest attempt to supply the place which prayer should occupy in Christian lives by meditation and resolution, by some solemn dedication of his day to the highest that he knows. And if such impersonal prayers are answered, Christians will believe that the answer comes from God. But, in no spirit of contempt or superiority, it must be pointed out that such prayers cannot be all that the Christian means by prayer. In prayer the Christian believes himself to be standing in the immediate presence of a personal Will who knows him through and through, and who wills the highest good of all created beings. To will the good with all his might—this, happily, is open to the Agnostic or the sceptic. And God forbid that we

should say that *that* can produce no effect upon his character; but it cannot have exactly the same effect that flows from the habit of realising to ourselves day by day the existence of a Will for the good, that works out His purposes independently of us, and yet effects those purposes of His partly through our co-operation. In a sense we may say that the deliberate will for the good is always prayer (*"laborare est orare"*), but it makes a great difference whether we do or do not think of the good as embodied in the personal Will by which the universe is governed.

The measure of a man's personal religion is, as I have said, very largely determined, not indeed by the number of prayers he says, but by the extent to which prayer enters his life,—the kind of prayers he prays, the intensity of those prayers, the earnestness with which, both by deliberate acts at stated times and also in the silent, almost wordless, prayer which should find its place in a Christian's inner life at other times, he strives to know God's will better, and to do it better. Are our prayers such that we can expect them to have these effects? Do we pray for the right objects—for those spiritual good things, those qualities of heart and character, those desires and inclinations, that direction of the will, which we know to be most in accordance with God's purpose for us? Are our prayers regular enough, thoughtful enough, earnest enough, for us to expect them to affect our characters? That question compels us to pass on from the matter of prayer to its manner. About

that I hope to say more next Sunday. Meanwhile, let me leave with you this one thought: prayer, to be really effectual, must be a deliberate striving, not merely for Christian virtues and graces in general, but for the particular spiritual gifts which each of us really wants.

And that such prayers may be, there must first be deliberate thought about our own particular temptations, that we may resist them; about the particular virtues or qualities of which we are most in need, that we may win them; about our own particular *duties*, that we may do them.

XI.

THE MANNER OF PRAYER.

"After this manner therefore pray ye."—MATT. vi. 9.

XI.

THE MANNER OF PRAYER.

LAST Sunday we were considering what it is that the Lord's Prayer teaches us to pray for. One petition only, we saw, is for any material good thing —that simple act of faith in the Fatherhood of God, "Give us this day our daily bread." It does not teach us to pray for particular temporal goods,—for things which we could only get by some suspension or violation of that course of nature which is only another name for the will of God. On the other hand, it does teach us to pray for spiritual good things—for a will, a character, a life in conformity with all that conscience, enlightened by Christ's teaching and the working of God's Holy Spirit in the world, has taught us to look upon as the highest, the divine ideal. With regard to such things, it is a law of the spiritual world that the prayer, in proportion to its sincerity and its intensity, is followed by more or less of what we pray for.

That is one of the points in which our Lord sets his own method of prayer in contrast with the prayers of the heathen. To-day I want to dwell on another respect in which the Lord's Prayer is set before us

as a model for our imitation. It is short. It consists of few petitions, and each of them is expressed in few and simple words. It is, indeed, in this respect perhaps primarily that our Lord intends to contrast His method of prayer with the long prayers and vain repetitions of the Gentiles, who thought that they would be heard for their much speaking. And yet from His own example we cannot suppose that He meant that we should only spend a very short time over our prayers, that we should literally confine our devotions to the fifteen seconds or so which it takes to repeat the Lord's Prayer. We know that the Master Himself was wont—not habitually, indeed, or as a piece of set routine, but at great crises of His life—to spend a whole night in prayer to God. How are we to reconcile the seeming contradiction between His precept and His practice?

Is not the key to the difficulty to be found in this fact, that the essence of prayer lies not in the number or the eloquence of the words that are said, but in the intensity with which we strive after those things which we believe to be in accordance with the will of God for us? Prayer is a matter not of the lips, not even of the heart or of the emotions only, but of the will. That is the essential fact that we ought to grasp. The Lord's Prayer should be the model for all our prayers. But the Lord's Prayer is general and indefinite, as all prayers must be that are to be adapted to the use of individuals of different characters, and in different circumstances, to say

nothing of different races and generations. If we want to pray with sincerity all that is really implied in that prayer, we shall have to translate each of these vague and general petitions into the terms of our own particular needs, of our own particular characters, our own particular circumstances. And if we are to do that, there must be a good deal in our prayers besides asking. Here is one great mistake that people are apt to make about prayer, as it seems to me: they suppose that prayer is all a matter of asking. If our prayers are to be answered, we must pray for the right things. If we are really to pray for the right things, there must be a good deal in our prayers besides asking, especially one thing —and that is thinking.

Thus take, for instance, the prayer for pardon. It costs us very little to say "we are all miserable sinners," in a vague and general way, with a strong mental emphasis on the "we," on the fact that other people are sinners too. We cannot expect so vague and general a confession of sins to have much effect upon our lives. We must surely ask ourselves definitely when and wherein we have sinned, if there is to be reality in the confession and earnestness in the prayer for pardon, reality in the repentance and intention of amendment. And to make this confession there must be self-examination.

A practice which has obtained such a wide acceptance for so many ages in the Christian Church as that of formal and periodical confession to a priest

cannot be without *some* spiritual advantages, however strongly we may believe that those advantages are outweighed by the disadvantages — the sacerdotal tyranny, the demoralising casuistry, the superstitious belief in Absolution—which seem to be inseparably associated with the system as a system. I have no belief myself in formal confession, at least for people of our race and time, except in the shape in which it has at all times existed in all, even the most Protestant, religious communities. The occasional consultation in time of spiritual perplexity or difficulty of some one—priest or layman—whom the person thinks qualified to help him by advice or sympathy or encouragement, is a thing which always has existed and always will exist. One of the objections to the attempt to introduce confession in its Roman form into our Church is that it really puts obstacles in the way of the natural and healthy intercourse between priest and people. Men would sometimes be ready to ask the advice of a clergyman, if they could be sure that they would not be supposed to be "going to confession." But all the same a practice so widely accepted must have some recommendations, and it is well that we who condemn it should consider how we can get what advantages it possesses without its drawbacks. And at least it must carry with it this good effect—that it compels particular self-examination and detailed acknowledgment of sin. Doubtless confession of the ordinary kind tends to lay too much emphasis upon particular and definite

sins, transgressions of rules—for the most part negative rules—of morality or Church discipline. We should not merely ask ourselves what definite sins we have committed,—immoral acts, pieces of excessive self-indulgence, unkind deeds or unkind words, petty dishonesties or neglects of duty,—but also what has been, and is, the general tenor of our lives; how far we are doing any work in the world; how far we are thinking, caring, striving for the good of our fellows as Christ would have us think and care and strive. These are the questions that we must ask ourselves if we would make the prayer for pardon a reality strong enough to bring with it that turning from evil to good without which there can be no true repentance, and therefore no true absolution.

There must be time, then, in our prayers for thinking about our past life and our present, for that comparing of ourselves with the divine ideal of human life which is called self-examination. I do not mean to recommend those elaborate strings of questions which we find set down in certain books of devotion. It is no use asking ourselves questions about long lists of possible sins for which we have not the inclination or the opportunity. It is no use for a teetotaler of many years' standing, for instance, to be asking himself whether he has been sober, or for a child to ask himself (as Renan tells us he was made to ask himself when he was a little boy in the *petit séminaire*) whether he has been guilty of Simony. A man must have been very inobservant

of his own inner life if he does not know pretty well what sins he has to ask himself about; and the less artificial and stereotyped his way of dealing with himself in such matters, the better. There is a special time, of course, for such self-examination when we are about to present ourselves before God's altar. And it is one of the main advantages of regular and not infrequent Communion, that it brings with it periodical opportunities for quiet thought of this kind. But a moment of such self-questioning there ought to be every morning, or every evening, if there is to be any reality in those words, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." And after self-examination must come resolution—definite resolution that we will try to avoid the sins of which we have been reminded, to do the things which we believe to be our duty, to cultivate the qualities of character and the habits of life which we know we most want. This also there must be in our prayers if there is to be reality in the petition, "Deliver us from evil."

And let me remind you again that the thinking, which should be the basis of prayer, should not be limited to private matters, to personal failings, and personal habits. If we are to say sincerely, "Thy kingdom come," we must be thinking in our own minds of some definite steps or phases in the coming of that kingdom of God, of the work of our calling, of the works of charity, the good causes, the social institutions, the scraps and bits of social reform or

social progress which we might do something to promote. Of this I will say no more at present, because I hope to say more about this side of prayer another Sunday.

Are not many prayers ineffectual,—do they not exercise, I will not say no influence at all (no sincere prayer could do that), but far less influence than they might exert on heart and character and life, because people do not take the trouble to ask for what they really want—for what they really ought to want, if I may say so? Do not many people go on repeating some little form of words which they have learned, it may be, in early childhood? God forbid that anyone should speak contemptuously of such a habit! Better a thousandfold to kneel down night and morning and say the very simplest form of words, than not to pray at all. The bare action of kneeling down cannot fail at least to keep alive some thought of God and of duty in the soul, which will go with us into our life's work. But more than this surely is needed, if our prayers are to be of the kind which may intelligibly be called a wrestling with God. The prayers ought to grow as mind and body grow, if they are to have the influence they ought to have on the real bent and direction, the real aims and aspirations of public and private life. Conventional prayers keep alive a conventional religion; and even conventional religion has its value. But the religion that makes a religious man demands for its sustenance something more than conventional prayer.

Let me reduce the result of these reflections to a few practical precepts. Only let me say that my suggestions, vague as they will be, are not made in a dogmatic spirit. Everybody must find out by experience what manner of praying really suits his own needs.

1. Firstly, then, we must make up our minds what it is we really want to pray for, and for this purpose we must leave sufficient time for our prayers. What I have said about the liberty that there must be in such matters is eminently applicable to this question of time. God forbid that any of us should condemn other people because their prayers are longer or shorter than his own! All one can say must be very general. On the one hand, it is clear to me that any system which, whether for clergy or laity, for religious community or for people living in the world (as it is called), turns devotion from a means into an end, which makes it into the substance and serious business of life instead of the support and inspiration of other work, is inconsistent with the Christian ideal of prayer. We must not suppose that we shall be heard for our much speaking. How much prayer will really profit the life, must depend on the character, the training, and the circumstances of individuals: we must not fall into the fallacy of supposing that because a certain amount of food or medicine will produce a certain effect, twice the amount of it will produce twice the effect. But, after all, to take too long over our prayers is certainly not a mistake

that many of us want warning against. On the other hand, if prayer is to be all I have been trying to show that it should be, it is clear that it must take some time. Is it quite superfluous to say that for all it should take an appreciable time? But if our prayers should be longer than they are apt to be, it is not so much that there may be more words, as that there may be more silence, more thought—time enough to realise that we are in the presence of God, time enough to think of our sins that we may repent of them, of our temptations that we may fight against them, of our neighbours that we may serve them, of our duties that we may do them. And for this purpose let me especially insist on the importance of prayer in the morning, when the day is still before us, and when the prayer may carry its support and inspiration straight into the day's work.

2. And then one word as to forms of prayer. I think it is well that we should use some form of words, lest our prayers should end in mere wandering or reverie. Perhaps some of the prayers in the Prayer-Book will supply the need of many: I do not know where to find better or simpler prayers than the three Collects for morning and evening prayer, for instance, or the General Thanksgiving, or the prayer for all conditions of men. But whatever other prayers we use, let there be some more particular prayer, however short, however simple, expressed in our own words.

For we do want in prayer to be thinking of our

special needs and duties and temptations. Our petitions will probably for the most part mould themselves into much the same words day after day, for the needs of each day and the duties of each day and the failures of each day, alas! are apt to be very much alike. But let there be room for the thought of any special duty or any special temptation or piece of work that may be facing us in the immediate future, and room also for the gradual modification of prayer as growth of character or change of circumstance may suggest new meanings and new applications of each petition in the model prayer which we have been studying.

XII.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

"Thy kingdom come."—MATT. vi. 10.

XII.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

ON the two previous Sundays I have spoken of other aspects of prayer. To-day I propose to say something about the most difficult question that arises in connection with prayer — the value and efficacy of prayer for others. The teaching alike of the Lord's Prayer and of all experience goes to show, on the one hand, that we ought not to pray for suspensions of the laws of physical nature, whether on our own behalf or on that of others; and, on the other hand, that we ought to pray for spiritual blessings for ourselves, and that such prayers are answered. But what are we to say to prayers for the spiritual good of others?

Now here, I think, we may say that our knowledge of psychical life—of the relations between mind and mind, and of the relations between the human mind and the divine—is not such as absolutely to exclude the possibility of our desires, emotions, willings, breathed out in prayer to God, reaching and helping other souls. There are well-established facts which seem to point in that direction. And the connection between mind and matter is so close that it is not impossible

that prayers for the sick—that most natural and cherished refuge of anxious and loving hearts—may likewise produce a real effect, even apart from the influence which the consciousness of being prayed for must often have upon the mind of the sufferer. These things may be. Our knowledge does not forbid us to think they are so. And yet I know that there are many minds which (rightly or wrongly) will be little affected by bare possibilities of this kind. This is a question to which it is inevitable, in the present state of our knowledge, that very different answers should be given by minds equally Christian, with equal faith in the divine government of the world, and in the existence of real communion between God and the human soul. And that being so, I think I shall not be wrong if I try to show reasons why we should pray for others as well as for ourselves, even though it were the case that the divine answer to such prayers comes only through the general working of God's providence, independently of the fact that those prayers are prayed, or of the influence which such prayers may exert on the praying soul. I do not wish to weaken any measure of faith that any one here may possess in a more direct and immediate efficacy of such prayers. I only want to help those who feel that both the example of Christ and the universal practice of Christians do commend the practice of intercessory prayer, and yet who feel more or less difficulty in reconciling such a practice with the view of the mode of God's government of the world to which their

reason may seem, with more or less confidence, to point.

It is essential to start with a clear recognition of the fact that prayer, in its essence, is not an uttering of so many words, but a direction of the will towards the objects which we believe to be good and in accordance with God's will. Prayer, indeed, can hardly be said to be possible without some words shaped in the mind if not uttered with the lips; for we know how difficult it is to think for long together without words, though the words constantly fail to express all that is in the thought. But it is the will that gives the prayer whatever efficacy it possesses: prayer is a deliberate direction of our will, or (as some may prefer to say) our desires or aspirations, towards certain objects. Now, if this be so, we could not say that Christians ought *not* to pray for others, unless we were prepared to say that Christians ought not to be constantly directing their desires and their wills towards the good of others as well as towards their own good. A Christian surely is not in a right state of mind unless his heart is full of such unselfish desires. And can we say that we are naturally so prone to interest ourselves in other people's welfare that it is superfluous for us to try, by the deliberate direction of our intention, to cultivate and strengthen this spirit of charity in ourselves? Whatever else intercessory prayer is or is not, at least it has its value as a school of charity.

And of these objects for which we pray, some at

least will be more or less within our reach. We may not at the moment be engaged in any particular course of action contributing to the end in question; but if the desire for the object is duly cultivated, it will in time produce its effects through us and through others. And even when the end is one which we individually may not be able to help, it is clearly right that we should desire the thing, if we believe that it is good. Sometimes the effect of our prayers in exerting and sustaining effort will be direct and immediate. We cannot sincerely and habitually pray (I do not say we cannot utter the words), but we cannot really pray for those who are "in danger, necessity, and tribulation," for "fatherless children and widows," and for "all that are desolate and oppressed," without asking ourselves sometimes whether we are doing what we might to bring about those things which we are solemnly telling God that we believe to be in accordance with His will. In other cases the effect of prayer may be (so far as we can see) remoter. We may not see what any one of us can do to bring about a just settlement of this or that particular difference among nations, still less to produce universal peace and disarmament; but still it must be right to desire, and therefore to pray, for unity, peace, and concord among all nations. And there can be no doubt that, if we could get enough people sincerely to pray for peace,—such a peace as should be consistent with justice and good government,—a real step would be taken towards bringing about, first a general will

for peace, and then the thing itself. Whatever else prayer may or may not be, prayer is a direction of our will or desires towards an ideal,—an ideal which we believe to be ultimately God's ideal—, and that ideal cannot, and must not, be a selfish ideal. Prayer is a mode of cultivating and building up devotion to ideals, and ideals do ultimately translate themselves into fact.

Let us now turn once more to the Lord's Prayer, and ask whether this view of what intercessory prayer should be is not very much in harmony with the spirit of its teaching. You will observe that not one petition of it is wholly and entirely intercessory; and yet no one petition of it is wholly and entirely self-centred. These petitions are of two kinds. Either we pray in them for certain blessings for ourselves and others, "Give *us* this day our daily bread, forgive *us* our trespasses, deliver *us* from evil," or they are wholly impersonal, and refer to the general course of events in the world without reference to any particular person or persons. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." In either case we may say that the Christian ought in every prayer of his to identify and associate himself with others. Every clause in the Lord's Prayer is, we may say, a prayer for the whole Church—that Church which should ideally be coextensive with all humanity. And that, surely, should be just the habitual attitude of the Christian mind: the Christian should live in a state of desire for others' good. And if he is to live thus, he must pray thus.

It may be that we shall best carry out the spirit of the Lord's Prayer in this matter by keeping our prayers for others general and comprehensive. But I do not think we need limit our intercessions to such very general aspirations as "Thy kingdom come." We must make them more detailed than that in order to make them more real. If we want our prayers to be real, to be prayers which are likely to influence ourselves and one another, we must translate that general petition into the language of our own time: we must pray for social justice, for instance, for the coming of a juster distribution or a less selfish use of wealth, for better feeling between classes, better provision for old age, and the like. Or at least we should have such things in our mind when we pray for the coming of God's kingdom in our midst. And this same consideration of greater reality may reasonably be pushed further: we may pray for any particular good work or cause that we have at heart. And so again, we may justify prayer for particular persons or particular good gifts for those persons.

Only, when we thus come down to requests for detailed objects, we must bear in mind two cautions.

1. One is a rule which has generally been admitted by all Christians at all times: that in proportion as we descend from those general principles (so to speak) which we know to be in accordance with God's will to greater and greater particularity, every petition must be increasingly accompanied by the implied or expressed "If it be Thy will." And

we may add (what perhaps has not been so universally remembered) that we must not pray for what we know to be out of accord with God's will. Thus (to take a simple illustration), in praying for the success of missions, we are hardly going beyond what we *know* to be in accordance with the will of God. Some measure of success, we may feel sure, it must be God's will to bestow on every attempt to diffuse Christian ideas about God and human life. If we were even to pray that all the inhabitants of India may become Christians, we should not be doing wrong; because to us it appears a good thing that this should be, and we know of no reason why it should not ultimately be so, though here we must much more decidedly remember our saving clause, "If it be Thy will, O God." We do not *know* that it is God's will that India should become Christian, though we know that we ought to strive to make it so. On the other hand, if we were to pray that all India might be made Christian in five years' time, that would be unspeakably absurd and presumptuous, since we know that it would be quite inconsistent with the general laws of God's government that so vast a spiritual revolution should take place in so short a time.

2. On the principle of the greater reality which it introduces into prayer, it is not wrong, I think, to pray for particular persons. Such prayers *may* produce a direct effect, or, if we think of the influence of prayer as indirect, we are clearly more likely to be

stirred up to greater helpfulness to others by praying for particular persons whom we know and can influence, than by praying for our fellow-creatures in general. But our prayers must not become selfish and exclusive. I doubt whether it is altogether well, assuming that escape from death is a thing that ought to be prayed for at all, that we should pray for the deliverance of our particular friends and relations in battle when that practically means that other people's friends and relations must be shot. And equally in spiritual things; if we do right to pray for spiritual blessings for particular persons, we should never altogether forget the rest of the world. It is allowable to make our prayers more real by specially mentioning our family, our friends, our country. We may specially pray for blessings on certain people, but not for "special blessings" upon those whom we love, which obviously implies that we desire a smaller blessing only for other people's relations and friends. It is inevitable that we should feel more concerned for our own; it is natural that we should express that concern in prayer: but we must not dictate to the Almighty who shall be more and who less favoured at His hands. Our reformer Wycliffe, surrounded on all sides by a vast organisation for securing special divine favours for those who could pay for them, went so far as to recommend that no prayers or Masses should be offered for particular persons, living or dead. That restriction may be unnecessary when we are dealing

merely with the spontaneous and untaught utterances of natural affection, which it must be at least harmless and consoling to bring before our Heavenly Father; but I must add that elaborate organisations for securing in a mechanical way a multiplication of prayers for particular persons or objects, do seem to me to savour a little of that confidence in the mere multitude of petitions which we are in the habit of supposing to be peculiarly characteristic of the Church of Rome. In the recently published life of Cardinal Manning, a correspondent of his is quite certain that his appointment was due to the special interposition of the Holy Ghost on account of the "numberless masses" which the Pope had ordered to be said. There are Protestant modes of prayer which are, at bottom, no less pagan.

There is one particular application of these principles which, in honesty, I must not pass over. There is no sort of prayer which is dearer to the heart of many than prayer for particular persons in illness. I may be asked whether this too will not be condemned by our principle of not praying for suspension of the laws of nature in our favour? I answer, in so far as the disease is a purely physical matter, we ought not to suppose that it can be affected by prayers of ours. We ought not, therefore, to pray for recovery from a disease known to be incurable. But when the disease is not of this necessarily fatal character, the influence of mind upon body is so great that we cannot positively say that prayer may not affect the issue.

There is not a little evidence to show that under some conditions such effects actually are produced. But whatever we think about that as a speculative question, we probably always do and always shall pray at such moments, when the heart is really moved and we tremble for the lives of those we love. And such natural outpourings of the heart to the God whom we are taught to look upon as a Father, cannot be wrong, provided we remember the two cautions—the "If it be Thy will," and the rule that nothing be prayed for which is known to be contrary to the declared will of God.

Subject to these conditions, no sort of prayer can be wrong. But I am loath to conclude without returning to that sort of prayer which is most certainly in accordance with God's will, which is most certainly effectual, and which most vitally concerns the spiritual life of every Christian man or woman—the prayer of each against his own temptations, for his own spiritual progress, and in general for that coming of God's kingdom among men, the willing and striving for which is inseparable from the individual's own spiritual welfare. I will try to sum up what I have to say on this matter with one or two very plain practical suggestions:

1. The more closely we can associate together our prayers for others and our prayers for ourselves, the more closely we shall be following the model of the Lord's Prayer. Ourselves *and* our brethren should be the implied or expressed object of every prayer which

has no special reference to our own peculiar character and circumstances.

2. Let us try to bring prayer and effort as closely together as possible. The most certainly efficacious of all prayers are the prayers for help in resisting one known temptation and doing one known duty; and a part of our known duty is to feel an ardent charity to our fellow-men. Such prayers cannot be in the long run without some effect. And when we pray more definitely for particular things and particular persons, let us pray *most* for the causes that we could help and the people whom we could influence. Prayer should be the great inspirer of effort: effort alone can give reality to prayer.

3. And, lastly, may I conclude with one remark applicable to all prayer, not only to this special question of intercessory prayer? If at any time you should begin to doubt, do not cease to pray. There may come a time, perhaps, unhappily to some, when a materialistic view of the universe may make prayer altogether unnatural. I do not say that people should try to go on praying then. But so long as you have even a hope that there is a Will in the universe better and holier than your own, seek to identify yourself with that Will. So long as Christ is to you even an ideal only, reach out after that ideal in prayer. Even should your idea of God at some dark moment of your life dwindle to something so vague as a "tendency that makes for righteousness," put yourself on the side of that tendency by steady and persistent

prayer, and it may be that practical experience of the effects of treating that tendency as a Person will supply you with one great argument for the belief in a living God with whom in prayer the human soul comes into a real personal relation.

XIII.

THANKSGIVING.

"Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me."—Ps. l. 23 (Prayer-Book Version).

XIII.

THANKSGIVING.

WHAT is the use of being thankful? Now that the close of the great war is, we may hope, well in sight, and people are already beginning to ask themselves how its conclusion shall be celebrated, it may not be amiss to set ourselves that problem. The Press has already begun to discuss the question: "Shall we have a day of National Thanksgiving?" That we should sanctify our national rejoicings by public religious services, that every effort should be made to prevent the day of national joy degenerating into a day of national orgy, must be the wish of every Christian soul. Thanksgiving is undoubtedly right. And yet the question I have propounded is not a superfluous one. For there is a kind of thanksgiving which is purely pagan in origin and in spirit. The savage was disposed to think of his god as very like himself, —and not always like himself at his best. Just as favours could be won from his chief by entreaty, flattery, self-humiliation, cajolery; so, he thought, could favours be won from his god. Just as he himself, or his chief, liked to be thanked and complimented and extolled by those for whom

he had done some favour; so the god, it was supposed, expected to have his assistance duly acknowledged, and would resent and punish any slight or neglect on the part of ungrateful subjects. The pagan god generally required some more substantial acknowledgment of his assistance—in the shape of sacrifice or offering, some portion of the slaughtered victim, some sculptured memento or adornment to his temple. And many a Christian shrine and many a Christian rite, not always so beautiful or so edifying as the play at Ober-Ammergau, originally instituted in fulfilment of a vow made in time of pestilence, still testifies to the fact that Christians too have sometimes supposed that their God was a God who could be bribed by vows of painful sacrifice or costly oblation. It was an immense gain in spirituality when in the later Judaism, and most completely in Christianity, it came to be felt that God demanded no more than verbal acknowledgment of His help, and that even words were valuable in His eyes only in so far as they testified to thankful hearts in the breast of the worshipper. "Sacrifice and meat-offering Thou wouldest not. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should fulfil thy will, O my God." [1]

But, even when the thanksgiving is encouraged merely as a mode of expressing and of exciting grateful feelings, it is quite possible that the taint of paganism may cleave to our worship. In speaking

[1] Ps. xl. 8–10 (Prayer-Book).

of paganism, of course I do not mean that all polytheistic religion was of this degraded type. There have been moral, spiritual, elevating elements in all forms of religion—even the lowest; but paganism is a convenient name to denote the kind of religion which is unconnected with strictly moral ideas, or is connected with moral ideas of a low and unspiritual cast. Our gratitude may become pagan when there is mixed with it any idea of rejoicing over others, of rejoicing that we have got something at the expense of others, that we are more favoured than they, —still more so when we allow ourselves to suppose that by such acknowledgments of God's help we can win a favour which we do not deserve, or which we do deserve but which God would not be disposed to give us unless He were so propitiated. Our gratitude becomes, I will not say pagan, but certainly inconsistent with that view of the Universe which science, history, and the teaching of Christ alike impress upon us, when we allow ourselves to think that some piece of material prosperity, personal or national, is necessarily a proof of our superior righteousness and desert,—that our victories in the late war are any proof of national righteousness, or that, if we had been defeated, it would necessarily have been a proof of exceptional national guilt. Christian thankfulness must be purged of all these elements. It is not to express such ideas that thanksgiving is a recognised element of all Christian worship; or that it is good at the moments when we have received

some special favour or blessing, to feel and to express by outward and formal acknowledgment our gratitude to God the Giver of it. We cannot believe that God cares for such gratitude, or for its expression, unless it is in some way *good* for us to be grateful — conducive to that state or direction of the heart and the will, that type of character, that spiritual growth, by which alone we can really be said to promote the true glory of God. God is glorified only when His will is done, when His purposes are promoted, when His kingdom among men is advanced. Once more we are brought round to the question, What is the use of thanksgiving, or of the gratitude of which it is the expression?

1. Firstly, then, I think we ought to answer, the giving thanks for our good things keeps alive in us a sense of God's providential government of the world. It is not well to attempt to explain God's providence in detail. We must not ignore or explain away the evil that there is in the world: we must not adopt modes of accounting for it which shock either our moral sense or our common sense. We must acknowledge that there is much in the world which is in itself evil, and which can be reconciled with our idea of God's goodness only by the belief that it is a means to an ultimate good, a means without which even God Himself could not bring about that good. But when we do see that the world is good, when we do see, or think we see, good coming out of evil, the course of outward events so ordered as to make life

a good thing for ourselves or for others, then we do well to think of all this as coming from God, and by that reflection to strengthen in ourselves the belief—so necessary to the spiritual life of man—that all things do work together for good under the guidance of a Mind and a Will supremely wise, supremely just, supremely loving.

2. And that leads to a further justification of thanksgiving. The highest thanksgiving ends in praise. The difference between thanksgiving and praise is that in praise we are no longer thinking immediately of any special act of goodness to ourselves, but are simply expressing our sense of God's character—of what He is in Himself. But the moral value of praising God, be it remembered, must depend upon the kind of character which our praises ascribe to Him. We do not praise God aright when we thank Him for having arbitrarily favoured ourselves at the expense of others. But when we praise God aright, when it is the Christian God, the God who is revealed in all human goodness, and pre-eminently in the character of Christ,—when it is the Christian God whose character we set forth, then praise carries with it all the spiritual effects that spring from the thought of such a God. And we do want to keep alive in ourselves this thought of God. Mere belief in God will have no effect upon our lives unless the thought of God—that is to say, of a Being perfectly righteous, just, loving—is constantly in our thoughts, rebuking our sins, encouraging our good purposes,

strengthening our feeble resolutions, cheering our faint-heartedness, infusing seriousness and earnestness into every thought and word and deed. To keep alive that thought of God is one of the great functions of all worship, but especially of that part of it which we call thanksgiving and praise. The worship of the Christian Church has always consisted largely in the singing of Psalms; and it is one of the great uses of the Psalms that they are so full of the thought of God. Sometimes, of course, the idea of God which the Psalms suggest to us is not the full-grown Christian idea of God. When that is so, we must mentally correct them in the light of Christian teaching. But many of the Psalms breathe the loftiest Christian idea of the nearness and the goodness and the mercy of God. To keep the image of such a God constantly before our thoughts must tend to inspire in us the longing and the striving after the same high virtues which, with lips and heart, we attribute to Him in whom in one sense all living beings, in a far higher sense all good men in proportion to their goodness, live and move and have their being.

3. And that consideration brings me to the third reason, the most directly practical of all, why it is good to offer thanks and praise to God. There is a thanksgiving which is pagan, and that at bottom (as we have seen) is the thanksgiving which is selfish. But it is not the thought of the Christian God that can inspire a selfish thankfulness,—a thankfulness which rejoices that we have more and others less. Gratitude

to God must inspire the desire to please Him, and the God whom we worship is a God who can be pleased only by goodness, and a goodness of which love is the highest expression. In the mind that thinks of God as Christ conceived of Him, the idea of the common Father must inspire thoughts of God's other sons. Reflection on the much we have received (whether in spiritual or in temporal ways) must suggest the thought of the less that so many others have received, others whom yet we believe to be no less objects of God's love. The thought of the much that we have *received* must bring home to us the little that we have *done*, the more that we might do, the more that we are bound to do. The measure of our advantages is the measure of our responsibilities. It is because it must tend to awaken this sense of responsibility that the reasonable and worthy offering of thanks and praise to God is not an unprofitable employment of time.

Gratitude to God for our recent deliverance from a great national peril will be a very vain thing unless it quickens a sense of national responsibility. Privilege should bring with it the sense of responsibility. Privilege in the long run (whether in classes or in individuals) can be sanctified, can be justified, only when it does bring with it the sense of responsibility.

And on the present occasion, at the moment which, if it is still a moment of national anxiety, is yet, we

trust, the eve of great national rejoicing, suffer me to give a national application to this idea, the connection between privilege and responsibility. It is a platitude to say that this is a great national crisis; that we stand at the parting of the ways. All this brilliant national success, this recovered prestige, this national self-gratulation, all these things of which the names have become catchwords—Imperialism, Expansion, Federation, and the like—may become good or bad just according to the use we make of them. They may simply swell our national vanity, foster the materialism of our ideals, add the vices of militarism to the vices of commercialism, strengthen and develop the more brutal, the more philistine element of our national character, lead to the forgetfulness of the things that have made us greater than all our military and naval glories,—our constitutional freedom, our sympathy with the cause of freedom everywhere, our championship of weaker races, I may add, the whole intellectual side of our national life. If we do improve this great opportunity which the providence of God has brought to us, this war may inaugurate a new era of closer federation between nations of kindred stock, of stronger and more resolute justice between race and race, of more strenuous and patriotic citizenship on the part of those privileged classes at home who have taken so active a part in the present campaign. If we use our opportunity, this war may ultimately conduce to peace, to justice, to goodwill. Putting aside all disputed questions as to

the immediate origin of this war, whether it was always inevitable or at what moment it became so, we do most of us believe that, on the whole,—on the whole, I fear, is the most that we dare say,—it represents the triumph of a higher ideal of social life over a lower ideal. Whether it will ultimately prove a blessing to the world—worth the cost of life and suffering, worth the heroic self-sacrifice which it has involved—must depend upon the keeping up of that ideal; upon our caring for justice and humanity more than for conquest or dividends, for rights more than for interests, for national duty more than for national glory. The amount which any individual, except a very few, can do to keep up and to raise the ideal of a nation, may seem too insignificant to be worth speaking of. And yet we shall misuse this moment of national success if it does not force upon us the question, "What do we really desire that our nation should be or do, and what does that mean when applied to the life and the duties of each individual citizen?" Each of us has some responsibility, at least for the thoughts and words which go to form national opinion, if not for the deeds which go to shape national policy.

XIV.

PENITENCE AND PENITENTIAL SEASONS.

"Turn Thy face from my sins: and put out all my misdeeds. Make me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me."—Ps. li. 9, 10 (Prayer-Book Version).

XIV.[1]

PENITENCE AND PENITENTIAL SEASONS.

AS we read the solemn psalm from which the words of my text are taken, we must be struck by the difference between its language and the language in which mere moralists, ancient and modern, pagan and even Christian, are wont to talk of sin. To the religious mind the sins of the past seem to cling around us,—to be a burden that must be removed, a pollution that must be washed out, a bondage from which we must be set free. The sin and the remedy that it demands alike present themselves almost as physical facts. It is impossible to speak of them without using physical metaphors, and the cruder forms of religion have ever been prone to treat and interpret the metaphors as literal realities, and to devise expiations, washings, purifyings, sacrifices, compensations of all kinds, which are supposed to take away sin by a quasi-physical operation. And religion of a more spiritual cast, while it has always insisted upon the impossibility of effecting moral purification or renewal by such means, has at least

[1] Preached on a week-day in Lent.

seen in such processes true symbols and representations of the spiritual change for which it yearns. But when we turn to the moralists—even to moralists of a lofty and spiritual type—we often miss what is characteristic of the language of religion. We hear no more about forgiveness, or removal of past sin, but rather of moral improvement, of progress, of high ideals. The past, we are often reminded, is unchangeable and irremediable. We are not encouraged to look back to the past, but rather forward to the future. Instead of the plaintive, half-despairing cry that something should be done for us, that a burden which is crushing us down should be removed, we are rather reminded of our own freedom, our power to do well now, no matter what we have done in the past. The intrinsic goodness and strength rather than the evil and the weakness of our own nature is set before us. We are encouraged to forget the dead past, to be manly and self-reliant, to waste no time in vain regrets, to listen to the voice of Duty, and to reach out after some high ideal.

Now, if we deal honestly with ourselves, we must, I think,—many of us,—admit that in some ways the teaching of the moralists comes home to us, and is found more helpful and inspiring than the tone of the characteristically religious teachers. We feel the vanity and the impotence of the old attempts to get rid of the past. We recognise—we feel that it is good that we should recognise, that it is morally

disastrous not to recognise—that "the evil that men do lives after them." If we have made other lives miserable or base, no repentance, no oblations or satisfactions of ours will turn those marred and wasted lives into lives of joy and goodness. The money that we have wasted in foolish self-indulgence, or worse, will not come back, nor the good that it might have done be done now, because we have repented. And even in ourselves the seeds of ill that the ill deeds have sown will still, if we observe ourselves truly, now and again be springing up and bearing their evil fruit, though we are genuinely sorry now, though we have amended our lives, and do the wrong acts no longer. And we feel that so far it is not merely reason, common sense, experience, that are on the side of the modern view. We feel that, to a certain extent, these truths are the very teaching of Christianity itself before it was corrupted by after-growths of semi-pagan practice, or crude and arbitrary theological system-making. The vanity of all attempts to blot out the past by ceremonial rite or outward oblation, is one of the characteristic ideas of St. Paul and of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And further, when we come to examine the teaching of our Lord and His apostles about repentance, we feel that the very word that they employ for repentance emphasises up to a certain point the teaching of the moralists—that the past is beyond recall; it is the present that is important. It is not *μεταμελεία* that they preach—merely wishing you had not done

what you have done—but *μετανοία*, change of heart, becoming a new creature. It is a significant little fact that one of the very few places in which the word *μεταμελέσθαι*, the ordinary pagan word for being sorry for a thing afterwards, is used in the New Testament is in connection with the remorse of Judas. The New Testament word for repentance, *μετανοία*, though not unknown to classical writers, does not (it appears) occur in the writings of Plato or Aristotle or any distinctively ethical writer. The very essence of the teaching of Christianity is, then, that the important thing is what we *are* now—not merely what we do, but what we are. If the heart is really changed, God will not impute the past. No expiation, or cancelling of the past, or compensation of the ill-doing, is possible or is demanded. It is a free pardon that is proclaimed by the teaching of Christ, not a pardon on some elaborate conditions, whether they take the form of sacerdotal expiations, or of accepting some cut and dried system of theological propositions, or of some mysterious feat of emotional legerdemain. For it is not arbitrary—this proclamation of pardon which Christianity, in all its forms, and in spite of all attempts to obscure it, has ever carried with it. We must not, we cannot think that God might quite reasonably and justly have exacted penalty or vengeance for sins past, no matter how completely the character has altered and the bent of the life changed, but that by as it were an extraordinary and (as it is almost represented sometimes) unjust and arbitrary though merciful pro-

clamation, He has been pleased not only to accept the present, but to blot out the past. It is a necessary deduction from the character of God, as Christ proclaimed it, that He must (to use the ordinary language) forgive sins. If God be really Love, if all that He desires is that men should be good as well as happy, He cannot be thought of as exacting retribution for the past, when it would do no good to the altered character. Punishment is not inconsistent with love, if only the punishment will do good. And Protestantism has doubtless been too dogmatically reckless in assuming that because the sinner has repented, and because God accepts that repentance, there may not still be room for discipline, for the improvement of the character by suffering—here and hereafter. But then that can only be because the sinful character is not wholly cured and transformed. When the character is wholly changed, then there can be no further need or use for punishment. The doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is, then, not an arbitrary doctrine, to be received submissively on the guarantee of a supernatural revelation. It springs immediately from the central truth of God's nature, as Christ revealed it, and as our reason and our conscience, when once opened to the light by that revelation, compel us to think of it—the truth that God is love.

So far, then, we may say that the Christian teaching about sin agrees with the thought of the higher and the deeper moralists and thinkers of ancient and of modern times. And all theories of the Atone-

ment which really deny these truths may be boldly thrown to the winds as caricatures and obscurations of the true and original Christian teaching. I mean all theories which represent that an angry God has to be propitiated, or that a past has to be blotted out, by some elaborate and mysterious transaction. I will not pretend intellectually to explain St. Paul's theory of justification by faith in a phrase or two; but we may feel, I think, that the part of it which is most precious and most permanent was just this very recognition—that it is the present state of the heart which matters, and that is just what the traditional theories of the Atonement have so often obscured or denied.

Christianity then, rightly understood, does not contradict the views of the moralists by its teaching about sin. And yet, after all, do we not feel that there is something about sin, about repentance, about the need of renewal, which the moralists, at least those of them who have not studied very profoundly in the school of Christ, have left out of sight? I want to look at the matter to-day in the most severely practical light, for the guidance of our own personal religious life. Why do religious teachers insist so much upon thinking about the past, upon repentance, upon sin as a sort of positive thing which we have got to fight and to escape from, or forgiveness as something which is somehow to get rid of that thing? Why cannot we simply take the view of moralising common sense and say, "Never mind about the past;

just do your duty now, and don't bother yourself with anxious scruples and morbid reflections"? The answer depends, I think, upon taking a true view about sin, about repentance, about forgiveness.

1. About sin. What this common-sense moralising is apt to forget is that a sin does not disappear simply because the particular bad act is past, and has not been and perhaps is not likely to be repeated. The truth which all the crude, exaggerated language of popular religious teaching really does represent, is that the sin reveals a defect of character, and that the defect remains until the character is really altered. And if the character be really altered, the alteration must show itself in genuine hatred and abhorrence of the past sin. That hatred is at once the condition and the expression of real change of character. That hatred should be ever growing deeper and deeper as the love of goodness grows stronger and stronger. And that hatred cannot grow unless we do sometimes think of our past sins—enough at least to know what they are and what is the character which they express. And do people always speak of their past sins, especially of things done a good time ago, as if they hated them? Do they not often speak of wrong things they did at school, for instance, as if they were rather proud of them? Is there not need, therefore, that we should remind ourselves that these things were expressions of a character which is ours now unless we have repented, unless we have come to feel pain and shame as we look back upon them?

Brooding over past sins is unprofitable enough, but we must think enough about them to make us ask ourselves, "Are we really better now? Under the like temptation should we not do the same again? And are not the things we indulge ourselves in now, in principle, of exactly the same kind?"

2. As to repentance. True repentance is the change of character itself. That is the thing that we want to strive after. And therefore repentance is not a thing that can be got over and done with, either at some great crisis of our life or at stated intervals—all-important as such stated times for self-examination and new beginnings really are as an aid to spiritual growth. For the things that may be done at any time are apt to be done at no time. Hence the great value, for instance, of regular and not infrequent Communions. Such opportunities are valuable just because repentance is a thing which ought in a manner to be always going on, as the formation of character ought always to be going on. For if it is the Christian character that is being formed, hatred—growing hatred—of evil, especially of the evil that is or was in our own hearts, is an essential part of it. The brighter the sunlight, the deeper and blacker grow the shadows. And if our repentance is to be of this kind, it is clear that it will come not by brooding over the past, but by lifting up our hearts to higher ideals, aspirations, examples. Is not that the real meaning of the Atonement,—at least one great meaning of it,—that it is by looking away from ourselves to the highest and purest embodiments

of ideal human nature, and especialiy to the greatest of them all, to Him in whom we recognise the fullest and completest revelation of the character of God Himself,—that it is in that way that men are saved from their sins ? Whatever power it is that makes us better, that is the power which takes away sin in the only sense in which it can be taken away—by making the sinner hate his sin and love the good.

3. And if that be the true nature of repentance, we see the true meaning of forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins is not (as I have tried to show) an arbitrary remission of a purely external penalty, to be submissively accepted merely on the authority of a supernatural revelation. God *must* forgive the past if it be indeed true that, though the past acts and many of their consequences remain, the character has been changed, the man has been made better. The true prayer for forgiveness is identical with the prayer to be made better. It is because Christ is the greatest power in the world to make men better that we pray to be forgiven through Christ, " for Christ's sake." So long as the punishment will make a man better, there may be forgiveness even while the punishment lasts ; but when the sinner does wholly hate the sin and has wholly changed his character (here or hereafter), then there can be no further need for punishment, if indeed it be true that God is what Christ made men feel Him to be. The forgiveness of sins is simply an element, a corollary of the fundamental Christian truth that God is love.

XV.

THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY.

"How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."—GAL. iv. 9–11.

XV.

THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY.

IN the present chaos of opinion and of practice in the matter of Sunday observance, it will, I trust, be of some use to devote a sermon or two to the consideration of the origin and meaning of this great Christian institution. To-day I shall confine myself for the most part to history and principles; next Sunday, I shall go on to consider some practical applications with reference to existing circumstances.[1]

I must not stay to consider the obscure origins of the Jewish Sabbath. In some form or other, as a religious festival, it is probably older than Jewish Monotheism. As a religious festival it is perhaps derived, in the first instance, from sun-worship. It is as a day of absolute rest that it becomes one of the most distinctive features of the later Judaism.

Whatever the origin of the Sabbath, and whatever the exact nature of its obligation for Jews, it may be confidently stated that the observance of the Fourth Commandment was never in the earliest ages of the

[1] For a full history of the Institution, see Hessey's Bampton Lectures, *Sunday*, 1861, and H. J. Hotham's Art. "Lord's Day" in Smith's *Dict. of Christ. Antiquities.*

Church supposed to be binding upon Gentile Christians, except by those who, in opposition to the whole spirit of Christian liberty, wanted to lay upon Gentiles the full burden of the Mosaic Law in all its ritual and restrictive detail. In the words of our text, St. Paul deliberately rebukes his converts for their observance of days. And I suppose no one who has entered into the spirit of St. Paul's argument will doubt that the Sabbath is one of the days the observance of which in a Gentile was regarded by the Apostle as a relapse into Judaism, a formal renunciation of that great principle of Gentile liberty which it was his special mission to preach. Jewish law and heathen ritual alike had an educational value, but both alike belonged to the childhood of the human race. "So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world."[1] That was not for the sons of God, but for those who, as children, were for the time in the position of slaves. To hanker after Jewish Sabbath observance was to turn again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, to a bondage from which the acceptance of Christianity ought to have emancipated them. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain."[2] "With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."[3]

To suppose that his only objection to this observ-

[1] Gal. iv. 3 (R.V.). [2] Gal. iv. 10, 11. [3] Gal. v. 1 (R.V.).

ance of days was that it was the wrong day which was observed, would be to make St. Paul stultify himself. Had that been the Apostle's meaning, he would have been as anxious to impress upon them the duty of keeping Sabbath on the first day of the week as to deprecate such an observance of the seventh day. There is no trace in the Apostle's time, or for some centuries afterwards, of the idea that the Fourth Commandment was still binding on Christians, but that by some act not precisely dated, of some authority not precisely defined, the obligation had been transferred from the seventh day to the first. The whole notion of such a transference is peculiarly absurd and self-contradictory from the point of view of those who claim for the Fourth Commandment the authority of a direct and immediate divine revelation. If the Church could amend such a commandment, it could also repeal it. And if it could do that, the new obligation—the obligation to observe the Lord's Day —can claim divine authority only in the same sense and to the same extent as any other command or institution of the Christian Church. As to the assertion of the writers and preachers who declare that it is "piously presumed" that the day was expressly changed by our Lord during the period of forty days in which we are told that He appeared to His disciples after He was risen from the dead, I need only remark that the presumption of such a hypothesis is much more evident than its piety. It cannot be too emphatically stated that the Christian Sunday is a

wholly new and purely Christian institution, having originally no connection whatever with the Jewish Sabbath, except in so far as it implies that division of time into weeks of seven days which was presupposed but not created by the Jewish Sabbath.

There is no reason to doubt that the observance of the first day of the week as a Christian festival, in commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, dates from the very earliest days of the Church's existence. The first Pentecost, according to St. Luke, finds the Christian community at Jerusalem assembled for purposes of worship on the first day of the week.[1] At Troas the disciples meet as a matter of course on the first day of the week "to break bread," that is to say, to celebrate—evidently in the evening—the Eucharist and the Agape or love-feast which then accompanied it. By the date of the Apocalypse the day has acquired a distinctive name, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day,"[2] by which expression I see no reason to doubt that the first day of the week is meant. All through the earliest Christian writings we find that the observance of the Lord's Day is a characteristic note of the Christian community. The Christian was, indeed, marked off from the heathen world around him by his respect for a loftier code of purity, of veracity, and of charity, than was

[1] That St. Luke may sometimes read back into the first days the usages of his own day, is not improbable; but the passage is at least evidence for the earliest period within St. Luke's memory.

[2] Rev. i. 10.

observed or even professed by his neighbours, by simplicity and self-denial, by abstinence from idol feasts and licentious or cruel amusements,—by these things far more than by any ritual observance. But so far as Christianity implied any external religious observance at all, the primary and essential note of a Christian was that he attended a meeting for Eucharist and worship every first day of the week. To forsake these weekly assemblies was to renounce the Christian profession. By 305 A.D. we find a council enjoining that anyone who kept away from them for three successive Sundays should "abstain for a short time, that he may appear to be punished."[1]

The observance of the Lord's Day is thus, from the first, a universally recognised Christian duty; but claiming no other authority than was implied in the traditional command to celebrate the Eucharist, and in the general duty of worship, which was not so much a positive precept of the Church's Founder as a necessary outcome of Christ's teaching about the relation of man to his Heavenly Father,—a necessity of the spiritual life attested by all religious, and especially all Christian, experience. But, clearly, the observance of Sunday consists at present in worship and in nothing else. In the earliest description which we have of the Christian Church from a heathen pen, the famous letter of Pliny to Trajan (*c.* 110),[2] we are

[1] "Council of Eliberis," Canon xxii. (Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. ii. p. 10).

[2] Lib. x. Ep. 97.

told that the Christians were wont to assemble "on a stated day, before it was light, and to sing hymns to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by a sacrament [or oath], not for any wicked purpose, but never to commit thefts, robberies, or adultery, never to break their word, or to refuse when asked to give up anything entrusted to them"; after which it was their custom to separate, and to assemble again in the evening to take a meal.[1] Doubtless the meeting early in the morning and late at night was forced upon the Christian body by the necessity of working for the rest of the day: Roman slaves or artisans could not have kept holiday for one day in seven in the midst of a pagan community. The Sunday then was observed in a quite different way from the Sabbath.

No doubt the Apostles themselves would naturally have continued to observe the Jewish Sabbath as a day of rest, in addition to keeping the Christian Lord's Day as a day of worship. But even among Jewish Christians the observance of the seventh day gradually disappeared, or was retained only as a day of fasting. "Not to Sabbatise" is a constant injunction of the earliest Christian writings. There was as yet no obligation to abstain from work on Sunday. To make the day to some extent one of religious rejoicing and relaxation from ordinary business was, however, a very natural outcome of Christian feeling. In the course of time we find it more and more encouraged. As

[1] Whether this meal was the Eucharist itself, or whether the Agape had now been separated from it, is a disputed point.

late as 364 a Council of Laodicea enacts that "Christians ought not to Judaize, or rest on the Sabbath, but to work on that day, and, honouring the Lord's Day, if they can, to rest as Christians."[1] To rest "if they can." But even Paula and her companions, the little monastic community described by St. Jerome,[2] were wont, after coming back from church, to apply themselves to their allotted works, and to make garments for themselves and others.

The transformation of the Sunday from a day of worship into a holiday in the common sense of the term, is the natural outcome of the Christianisation of the Roman Empire. As pagan holidays ceased to be observed, the need was naturally felt of other holidays. The chaos of religions and the inordinate multiplicity of festivals which they brought with them, combined with his growing disposition to favour Christianity, induced the Emperor Constantine, even before his open conversion (in 321), to enjoin the observance of "the day of the Sun" (there is, of course, no explicitly Christian language) as a general holiday, though with the restriction that in the country—in the country, still for the most part pagan—sowing and vinedressing, when they could not so well be performed on another day, were not to be given up.[3] The

[1] Canon xxix. (Mansi, *Concilia*, tome ii. p. 570): *τὴν δὲ κυριακὴν προτιμῶντας εἴγε δύναιντο σχολάζειν ὡς χριστιανοί.*

[2] Jerome, Ep. cviii. 19.

[3] Cod. Justin., iii. tit. 12, l. 3.

conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire, naturally brought in a gradually increasing strictness in the observance of Sunday as a general and a compulsory holiday. To the injunction of worship there was now added, by the authority of State and Church alike, the interdiction of work, or rather of servile work. By servile work was meant the ordinary business of life—not only manual labour, but trade, litigation, money-making, professional employments of every kind. It became a day of rest—not of mere inertia, but a day for the cultivation of the higher life, the satisfaction of those higher religious, intellectual, and social needs for which the necessity of labour leaves to the mass of men so little time on other days. But even now the obligation of this rest was not derived from the Fourth Commandment, nor was the Commandment to rest interpreted with the ceremonial literalness of the Jewish scribes. It was only as the patristic age passed into the Dark Ages that we find this identification of Sunday with Sabbath growing up. The process was hardly complete before the time of Charles the Great. And we shall have to come down even later, perhaps to the writings of Thomas Aquinas, to find the explicit statement, "the Sabbath is changed into the Lord's Day." It is curious to find the bibliolatrous Puritans of seventeenth-century England adopting as one of their most characteristic tenets, a theory which was as much the peculiar invention of the Middle Age as

the Transubstantiation or the compulsory confessional which they abhorred.

And yet even the Middle Age did not condemn such things as locomotion, secular study, or amusement on the Sunday. The identification of Sunday with the Fourth Commandment is protested against alike by Luther, by Calvin, and by John Knox himself. When John Knox went to see Calvin at Geneva, it is said (though I cannot give the authority for the statement) that he found him playing bowls on a Sunday. Indeed, the earlier Protestants were rather disposed to deprecate the whole institution as a Popish superstition. It was as a reaction against this tendency that the later Puritans were driven to find a sanction for the threatened institution in the Fourth Commandment. Sabbatarianism as a fully developed system was first maintained in a book published by one Dr. Bound in 1595, and it never spread much beyond England and Scotland. In the seventeenth century, when Isaac Casaubon taught in the Protestant University of Montpelier, disputations were still held on Sundays.[1]

Now it may seem the tendency of these remarks to inculcate a lax observance of the Sunday, or at least to advocate the adoption in this country of what is known as the continental Sunday. I can only say that such is very far from my intention. But we have no right to disguise or conceal the historical facts because some people may proceed to draw from

[1] Mark Pattison, *Life of Casaubon*, 1875, p. 108.

them inferences which we dislike. Practical applications I must leave to another Sunday. To-day I want merely to lay down principles. Let me then sum up the principles of Sunday observance in three propositions:

1. The observance of Sunday as a day of worship is an apostolical and universal Christian institution: it rests upon the authority of the Universal Church.
2. The duty of abstinence from ordinary and postponable work is also of ecclesiastical obligation, though of much later enactment.
3. There is no positive prohibition of amusement on Sunday, except so far as such prohibition may be necessary or desirable with a view to securing for all, or for as many as possible, the opportunity of observing the two fundamental Sunday duties—Rest and Worship.

And that I may not be misunderstood, let me add one or two explanations:

1. As to what I mean by the authority of the Church, I do not think that the authority of the Christian Church is a light one, provided that it is really the Church in its true sense from which the injunction is derived. The Church in its true and highest sense means "the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world." And there is no Christian precept or institution going beyond the requirements of the eternal laws of morality which

can claim this authority in so high a degree. And in this matter pre-eminently it is not the authority of the bishops or clergy only to which we appeal, of formal councils or patristic dicta, not the authority of one age or country, one Church or sect, but of the general Christian consciousness of all ages (since the first growth of the institution) and (amid all varieties of local custom) of all countries and all Churches, with the exception of the insignificant modern sect which still observes the seventh day. And it is not merely custom or numbers to which we appeal. Majorities are often wrong; but this is an institution which has commended itself most strongly to the most Christian minds. No external rite or religious practice, in short, could well come to us with a greater weight of spiritual authority.

2. We have seen that the antiquity and continuity of the Christian Sunday have not excluded considerable change, adaptation, development in matters of detail. But, in this as in so much else, it is all-important for the Christian to bear in mind that, though all things are lawful for him, all things are not expedient, all things edify not. The question about this or that piece of Sunday observance is not whether such and such an indulgence is positively forbidden, but whether that or something else is the better course. The question is not whether this or that feature of the traditional English Sunday can plead any divine authority or any enactment of the universal Church;

but what sort of Sunday is really best here and now—in the highest spiritual interests of ourselves and our fellow-countrymen. On the practical side of the matter I shall have something to say next Sunday.

XVI.

THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY.

"All things are lawful; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful; but all things edify not."—1 Cor. x. 23 (R.V.).

XVI.

THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY.

LAST Sunday we traced in barest outline the history of the Christian institution of the Lord's Day. We found that in its origin the institution had nothing to do with the Sabbath, and that its observance cannot rationally be considered to arise from the Fourth Commandment. It was established by the Church first as a day of worship, then as a day of rest. Gradually, as Christianity became the established religion of the empire and pagan holidays disappeared, it came to be observed with increasing strictness as a public holiday, on which it was a duty to abstain, as far as possible, from ordinary work; but its identification with the Sabbath was a blunder of the Dark Ages, revived and stereotyped by Puritanism. In regard to amusements, the early Church only discouraged them in so far as they were inconsistent with the higher uses of the day. The prohibition of all amusement, of all intellectual pursuits not purely religious, of all locomotion, and of all ordinary social intercourse, was the unhappy peculiarity of English and Scotch Puritanism, though doubtless closely connected with much that was best

and most solid in the great movement which is after all the chief source of the religion of modern England.

But the fact that the Sunday is only of ecclesiastical origin is no reason why it should not be respected. The obligation is all the greater, because here, practically, all bodies of Christians are in agreement. And this duty is a threefold one: it includes, (1) the duty of worship; (2) the duty of rest; and, (3) the duty of allowing others both to worship and to rest. In considering what these obligations practically amount to, three important principles should be borne in mind: (1) The principle of Church authority, which is at bottom only the great Christian principle of brotherly love ("submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God"[1]). And the principle which requires us to observe the rule of the universal Church, requires us also to respect the customs of our particular Church and time and country. We are not necessarily condemning Frenchmen for going to the theatre on Sunday because we respect and approve for ourselves the English rule of not doing so. And (2) Church authority after all must have a basis in reason. It may be right sometimes to submit to a rule that we cannot approve. But Church rules were originally made for the spiritual good of the community. If a later generation comes to take a different view as to what is for the spiritual good of modern society, the rule should be altered either by formal Church action

[1] Eph. v. 21.

or by the silent action of public opinion. Therefore the ultimate basis of the institution itself must be sought in its intrinsic reasonableness; and in interpreting the rule in detail we must ask what will contribute most to the spiritual well-being of ourselves and the society in which we live. (3) It should be remembered that in all such matters the question for a Christian ought to be, not what is not forbidden, but what is best. To guide our conduct by a code of external prohibitions, to give up good customs and traditions just because we have discovered that they were unknown to the Apostles or the ancient Fathers, is to fall into precisely that spirit of legalism, or Judaism, against which St. Paul and his successors so strenuously set themselves. It is to treat the Christian Lord's Day as if it were indeed an arbitrary, positive ordinance like the Jewish Sabbath. The question for us is not how we may without transgressing any positive precept of God or the Church make the least of our Sundays, but how we may make the most of them.

Bearing in mind these rules, let us ask what Sunday should mean for us. That we do want worship and that we do want rest, and that we cannot have either unless we have particular seasons set apart for them and fenced off from the intrusion of ordinary business by general consent—these are points which I need not labour. The question is, What sort of worship, what sort of rest? Most of the exaggerations on this subject—most of those restrictions of the Puritan

Sunday against which not only the worldly but the religious mind of our day has for some time been in acute rebellion—may, I think, be traced to the same source, to a narrow and inadequate view of what is meant by worship and of what is meant by rest.

First, then, worship. I do not myself think it easy to exaggerate the importance of the general habit of public worship in its formal shape. All experience seems to be against the idea that, for a community or for individuals, the Christian ideal can long continue to exercise a commanding and paramount influence where the habit of church-going has been given up. Of course we all know that particular individuals who never go to church are sometimes much better men than the average of those who do. But that the highest Christian character cannot as a rule be permanently sustained without worship, is a proposition for which we may appeal to an enormous accumulation of evidence.

But, important as formal worship undoubtedly is, it would be a great mistake, it seems to me, to limit the idea of worship in its connection with Sunday to the mere act of going to church. I venture to think that we should try to keep up the religious character of Sunday as a whole. That does not mean that the entire day must be spent in reading the Bible or other religious exercises. It means that it should be a day set apart for the cultivation of the higher part of our nature. Amusement of a certain type, social intercourse of a certain type, reading or

study of a certain type, may all form part of the truly religious Sunday. But there should be a difference in all these respects between the Sunday and the ordinary day, if the highest ideal of the institution is to be kept up. It is impossible, of course, to say that any amusement which is not wrong on other days is positively wrong on Sunday. But some amusements are too much of a business; others make too great a demand upon our time; others involve unnecessary labour for people who want their Sunday as much as, or more than, ourselves; while others seem in an indefinable way inconsistent with the spirit of a day specially set apart for the highest and best things in life. So with social intercourse; nothing can be more in keeping with the idea of Sunday at its best than that it should be a day on which relations and friends should meet each other. But it is surely convenient, apart from the question of increasing the labour of others, that there should be one day in seven reserved, as much as may be, for family life, for friendship, for real conversation, rather than for mere gregariousness, or feasting, or "society" in the conventional sense of the word. Similarly, as to reading. A Sunday that is merely secularised without being rationalised will leave no time for reading: in a Sunday that is both rational and religious, time will be carefully reserved for reading—at least in the case of those who do not undertake any sort of religious or charitable work for others on that day. And I will plead that we should not

wholly give up the old-fashioned idea of a special kind of Sunday reading. I do not mean that we should read nothing on Sunday but what are commonly called religious books. It is well, indeed, to remember that there is such a thing as a duty of religious self-education. There is a devotional life which wants sustaining, though it is often sustained best by works other than what would be technically called books of devotion. And there is an intellectual religious life which demands study. Modern scholarship has altered not a little our attitude to the Bible. It need not, and ought not, to be less to us than it was to our fathers, but it certainly will be less to us if the only effect of modern ideas upon it is to make us read it less, instead of studying it more intelligently. The understanding of the Bible and the understanding of the Christian faith in the light of modern difficulties, do demand real intellectual effort. And few are likely to find time for reading of this kind if they do not find it on Sundays. But I do not mean to limit my idea of Sunday reading to books which would usually be called religious or theological. There is such a thing as a duty of intellectual cultivation for its own sake. Some part of the ideal Sunday might, I think, be given to such culture. Sunday, then, should be reserved for the higher kind of reading, particularly for the kind of reading that inspires practical wisdom and sustains lofty ideals. Much poetry, much biography, much history, a few novels, but

not so very many, may be said to belong to this class. The important thing is not what we do not read, but what we do read. On Sunday we should read something that is at least a little higher, intellectually and spiritually, than the ordinary week-day reading of perhaps most people.

So much for the duty of worship. And now as to the duty of rest. The irrational kind of Sabbatarianism has arisen partly from a too narrow idea of worship; still more often it has involved a too narrow idea of rest. That refreshment of body and mind and soul which is the ultimate use of Sunday, demands something besides mere negative abstinence from toil. It is a matter of familiar experience that the most satisfactory rest is got by change of employment. We should import into our idea of Sunday rest something of the associations of the old Greek σχολή. The word σχολή, originally meaning leisure, came to mean school, because the idea of leisure suggested to the Greek mind emancipation from all work that was necessary, irksome, a mere means to an end, and so came to stand for employment in the things which were worth having for their own sake, intrinsically valuable and delightful.

And this idea is, I think, well enough expressed by the traditional definition: the work that should not be done on Sunday is servile work—which may be interpreted to mean ordinary business as well as manual labour. Of course there are obvious exceptions. There is some work that must be done

by ourselves or by others if the remainder of the day is to be spent in a way that conduces to its two essential purposes of worship and rest. There are other occasions when the ordinary work of the week must perforce be allowed to encroach upon Sunday. When work has to be done within a definite time, when the duties of our station would be neglected, or others would suffer, if work were postponed, it is mere superstition to condemn the doing of it on Sunday. Sunday is a means to an end, not an end in itself; that was the real meaning surely of the principle which our Lord Himself applied even to the old Jewish Sabbath. If the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, still more so Sunday. Sunday is a means to an end. But as a means to an end, we cannot too jealously guard against the gradual, insidious encroachments of ordinary professional or public work or mere business of any kind upon the rest and enjoyment of the day.

The third principle of Sunday observance is that each man should endeavour to make Sunday a day of worship and of rest, not merely for himself, but also for others. It is this principle which, more than any other, ought to set a limit to Sunday amusement. Even when the particular amusement does not directly involve much labour, the growth of Sunday amusements may very easily lead to Sunday ceasing to be a day of worship. It is impossible, of course, in principle, if the basis of the

institution be what I have tried to show it to be, to condemn Sunday boating. There is no reason why a man living by the river should not spend some hours of Sunday in rowing his own boat, if he may admittedly spend the same number of hours in walking. But if Sunday is to become the regular time for all-day river parties, it is quite certain that church-going will cease to be even as much the rule as it still is in English society. If all the ordinary amusements of life go on just as they do, or more than they do, on other days, not only actual worship, but also that wider kind of worship and that higher kind of rest for which I have been pleading, will be simply crowded out. Surely amusement, as it is frequently pursued at the present day, is itself one of the things from which we want occasional rest.

Moreover, many of these amusements do seriously increase labour for others. Of course in this matter there must be compromise. A rational Sunday cannot be provided, at least for town populations, without involving labour for some: though every care should be taken that, so far as possible, the opportunity of worship should not be wholly taken away from any class of men, and that rest lost on Sunday should be given back on other days. But there must be some sacrifice, if Sunday is to be made a day of rational rest for as many as possible. It is fanciful to suppose that if the Museums and Art Galleries and Libraries are open, the public-houses will be empty. Still it

is a rational demand, it is in the interests of the higher Sunday (if I may use the word), that such places should be open for part of the day, and again that it should be possible for people to get into the country or to pay visits to friends who live at a distance. It would be otherwise if it were proposed to open theatres and encourage race meetings or cricket matches on the Sunday. The continental Sunday means a day of amusement for one half of the world, or perhaps less than half, at the cost of additional labour for the rest. But I purposely abstain from entering into further detail on such matters. Detailed applications are for each man's conscience. I only plead earnestly that before allowing ourselves to indulge in or sanction some new departure from the traditional English Sunday, we should consider not merely whether this or that is in itself wrong on Sunday (that is the old Jewish point of view), but how it will bear upon the rest of others, how it will bear upon the worship of others, what will be its ultimate and remote effects upon the general tone and spirit of the whole institution. It is important to remember that the consequences of our acts will not stop just where we wish them to stop. For particular individuals it might well be that a game of cards on Sunday evening would be much better than the conversation in which they would indulge if they were not playing cards. But what we have to ask is, whether the growth of a general habit of card-playing on Sunday evenings

would or would not be an improvement upon the established tradition. A dull Sunday is to my mind no gain whatever to the cause of religion or morality, but we should be very jealous of the little, silent changes which may gradually destroy the character of Sunday as a day for the special cultivation of the higher life. We do not want a dull Sunday, but do let us keep a quiet Sunday, and with it the possibility, for ourselves and for all who desire it, of a religious Sunday. And if we are to do this, we must have the courage very often to refuse to do things in which it is quite impossible to say that there is any harm. We are not bound to do everything in which there is no harm, or to give any reason for not doing it. We need not condemn other people. We need not say that this or that is wrong on Sunday. It is enough to say that for ourselves and for our children we do not like it, and we do not choose to do it.

If we take a broad retrospect of the history of Sunday observance, we shall feel, I think, that the typical Scotch Sunday, though it has been the means of nurturing stern virtues, has not on the whole been—at all events is not now—a real gain to Religion. The gloomy Sunday has often been the one main source of revolt and reaction against the religion of a religious house. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that if Christianity is on the whole a really stronger force among us, if it dominates and influences and enters into men's lives more than it does in most parts of continental Europe, it is very

largely the more religious observance of the Sunday that is the cause or the condition of that fact. If Religion has not a large place in our thoughts on one day in the week, it will pretty certainly have no place at all on the other six.

XVII.

REVELATION AND THE BIBLE.

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son."—HEB. i. 1, 2 (R.V.).

XVII.

REVELATION AND THE BIBLE.

THESE words may, I think, serve as our best starting-point for some considerations as to the true nature of revelation — revelation or inspiration. For our present purpose we may take these two terms to mean practically the same thing. The word revelation is perhaps the best, because the most free from misleading associations.

That our ideas of revelation want some widening or expansion, needs no showing; or rather, perhaps I should say, they are much in need of clearing up. The widening and expansion with most of us have probably taken place of themselves, whether we wished it or no. What is wanted is to save the whole idea from disappearing altogether, and coming to mean just nothing at all to us.

There is a view of revelation which has clearly become impossible to modern men. That view was something of this kind. God created the world, it was supposed, and men upon it, but left them without any natural power of attaining to the knowledge of Him or of His will, without any natural religious faculty, and without any natural moral faculty; or, if men once

possessed these things, they had been so dwarfed and stunted by the effects of a far-off, ancestral fall, that they might be treated as practically non-existent. But at certain rare intervals of time, God, who was thought of as commonly leaving the world and the greater part of its inhabitants to take care of themselves ("an absentee Deity," as Carlyle has it), interposed and supplied various pieces of information about Himself—dogmas, historical statements, moral precepts, ceremonial injunctions—in a supernatural way to certain favoured persons, authenticated and attested by various interferences with the ordinary course of nature accomplished through the instrumentality of these same persons. The words and deeds of these favoured individuals were subsequently written down by themselves, or more commonly by certain other persons, who were equally prevented by supernatural assistance from making the smallest mistake in their report, or in any comment they might make upon that report.

After a time the series of these interpositions ceased altogether, but the written record remained; and by this record all men were for ever required, under threats of everlasting torments, to shape their thoughts and guide their conduct, without any power of understanding the reason or ground or principle of what they were required to believe or to do, but simply on the basis of the historical evidence that this interposition had actually taken place, that the mechanically inspired words had actually been

spoken, guaranteed by miracles, recorded verbatim by the mechanically guided reporters.

I will not ask how far such a creed ever commanded the real allegiance of any human soul. Probably there has never been a time when such an account would have been much more than a caricature of the real beliefs cherished by the most Christian souls, although it is a caricature to which at certain periods the Theologians — the Theologians, rather than the practical Christians—have very much laid themselves open. I will not ask, again, how far such a conception of revelation derives any support from the book of which it professes to be an account, or from the early Church to whose selection is due that collection of writings which we commonly speak of as the Bible.

Nor will I attempt to analyse exhaustively the causes which are making such a conception of revelation more and more impossible among us, — the advances of physical science, wider knowledge of other religions and their history, stricter canons of historical evidence, more exact study of the sacred writings themselves, and so on. I will ask rather how we are to replace such a conception. I assume that the old theory is dead or rapidly dying: the question is, "What are we to put in its place?"

Now I would insist, to start with, that it was not merely because the historical facts upon which this theory was based have turned out to be very different from what they were once supposed to be, that this

view of revelation has become impossible to us. Its radical defect lay deeper down than that; it entirely misrepresented the true constitution of human nature and its relation to God. If this were really a true account of man's nature, what would have been the use of a revelation to him if it had actually been given? Think, for instance, of the moral side of the matter: you will see what I mean most easily, perhaps, on that side. If man, as he was created, had really not been a moral being at all, if he had no natural power of distinguishing between good and evil, what would any revelation have availed him? He might, no doubt, on the basis of such a revelation, have accepted the fact that certain acts would be attended by reward, while certain others would entail punishment; but that would not have told him the real difference between good and evil. You may make a dog abstain from certain acts from fear of punishment, but that does not make the dog a moral being. There is no moral value in abstaining from things which you will be punished for doing; so long as you abstain from them merely because you will be punished if you don't. You can't take the notion of "good" or "duty" from the outside, as it were; you can't (as Plato would say) take the principle [1] and put it into a mind which has not got the capacity at least of receiving and entering into it. And equally incapable would such a mind be of applying the moral teaching if it could once have been accepted. What

[1] τὸν λόγον.

would be the use to a mind which was by nature purely selfish, incapable even of admiring and appreciating unselfishness, of a supernaturally guaranteed command to love one's neighbour as oneself? You can't be unselfish unless you can appreciate the intrinsic beauty and nobleness of unselfishness, and such an appreciation cannot be imparted by the supernaturally guaranteed information that selfishness will be punished. Just think again of a man with no natural capacity for distinguishing good and evil, attempting to make out in detail his duty to his neighbour from his Bible, used as a supernaturally authenticated law-book. History has shown us at times some approach to such a use of the Bible, and the result of it is summed up in the adage that the devil can always quote Scripture to his purpose.

With such a conception of human nature, the idea of a revelation is indeed impossible — putting aside all particular questions of evidence or historical criticism. But such is not the view of human nature to which we are led either by the teaching of the Bible itself or by the thoughtful study of human nature for ourselves. The Bible tells us that man was created in the image of God; and all modern philosophy which allows any room for the idea of God at all (and there is very little real philosophy that does not) teaches us the same thing. We are entirely on the wrong tack when we broadly and sharply contrast reason and revelation, the *purely* natural and the *purely* supernatural, the unassisted human

intellect with the inspired teaching of prophet and evangelist. If man was created in the image of God, if the human intellect is (as Christian and non-Christian teachers alike have delighted to call it) a spark of the divine, there can be no unassisted human intellect, no *merely* natural reason. The thoughts of man, in so far as they are true thoughts, must all of them come to him from God. They must all be partial communications to us of a knowledge which in God is perfect. And particularly, in a special and more important sense, man's thoughts about goodness and about God — every high and holy aspiration, every idea of duty, every emotion of love—must be regarded as coming to him from the one source of all truth and all goodness. Yes; we must school ourselves to see revelation everywhere, or we shall end by seeing it nowhere.

At first sight it may appear, perhaps, that by thus widening and extending our idea of revelation, we have done away with all that gives that idea its real value for those who rightly see in the Old and New Testaments a true revelation of God. The attempt to explain, it will be thought, has ended in explaining away. But because we say that God has revealed Himself in some measure to all men, we do not imply that He has revealed Himself to all in equal measure. Take once again the ethical side of revelation. After all, few will deny that every man has some natural power of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong. Christians have generally

agreed to see in conscience the voice of God Himself. The champions of conscience in that unhistorical age, the eighteenth century (Bishop Butler, for instance), were too much in the habit of arguing that, but for the distorting effect of self-deception or superstition, all men had an equal power of deciding what was right and wrong in any particular combination of circumstances. Bishop Butler, for instance, tells us that he does not doubt that the question what he ought to do will be decided "agreeably to truth and virtue by almost any fair man in almost any circumstance." In the light of evolutionary ideas, or even in the face of an intelligent study (let us say) of Homer and the Bible, such an idea can only be described as a monstrous absurdity. Undoubtedly the moral code of a savage is not the same as that of a Georgian bishop; that of David was not the same as that of Isaiah; the ideal even of the ancient Christian Fathers was not in many respects the same as that of a modern English Christian (whether he call himself Roman Catholic or Anglo-Catholic or Protestant). And even in the present day we see very different degrees of moral capacity. Not all even among good men have an equally delicate conscience, equal moral insight, an equally pure and lofty ideal of conduct and character; still less have all equally trained and disciplined their natural capacities. For it is most important from a practical point of view to remember that conscience does want training quite as much as any other intellectual faculty. Yet we may recog-

nise, alike in the dim tribal morality of the most degraded savage and in the imperfect morality of the most commonplace modern man of the world, some measure of revelation: whatever of moral truth a man has in him comes from God. And these different degrees and measures of revelation which we observe in the moral sphere are still more obviously recognisable in the strictly religious sphere.

We need not shrink from discerning in the dimmest, vaguest feeling after God which we can discern in the lowest of heathen religions, the working of the self-same Spirit which was outpoured in so much higher and fuller a way upon the great prophets of Judaism. But more emphatically even than with the moral consciousness, it must be asserted that the highest developments of the religious consciousness have been the especial privilege of few nations and few individuals. It is chiefly through recognising, appropriating, and participating in the truth which is revealed to the few that the many can attain the measure of religious insight which is granted to them. I do not mean that they must accept blindly, and purely on external authority, the truth which is communicated to the few, though that must, from the nature of the case, represent the earliest stage of religious education. The same Spirit which was outpoured in exceptional wise upon the few is granted in some measure to the many, and enables them to recognise the voice of God in the utterances of the prophet or the religious genius. It requires some

poetic feeling to appreciate the poetry of Shakespeare, but not so much as it takes to be a Shakespeare. And so, though not all men are prophets, no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost, —the Holy Ghost dwelling in some measure in him, in fuller measure in the Christian society in whose life he participates.

Now I think that this principle of degrees in revelation will help us to clear up our minds about a question on which it is very important at the present day that we should have clear ideas—the sense in which we ascribe an exceptional position to the Old and New Testaments. We cannot look upon what we call the Bible as the only revelation, or as in all its parts an equally perfect revelation of God. There are parts of the Old Testament which certainly teach a lower morality and lower ideas about God than the writings of many non-Jewish sages. The philosophically educated Greek Fathers always recognised the work of the Greek philosophers as, no less than the teaching of the Jewish prophets, a *præparatio Evangelii*.

The Old Testament is a record of religious evolution — not of the whole of it, but of a particular section of it,—a section of it which is of peculiar and exceptional importance to the world for two reasons. It is a history of the process by which a certain little Syrian tribe with a primitive religion, originally not very different from that of surrounding tribes, gradually came to see in their tribal deity Jehovah the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, the one

only true God, a God perfectly righteous, and delighting in righteousness. And that is a process absolutely unique in the history of the world. Isolated thinkers elsewhere had glimpses of the truth, but the Jews were the first great monotheistic people. That fact alone must for ever give to the Jewish Bible a unique and imperishable predominance among the religious literatures of the ancient world for all who believe in God, though we shall do well at the same time to insist very strongly on the fact that it is the ultimate result of the development, rather than its earliest stages, which differentiates it so strongly from other collections of sacred books.

And that brings me to the second reason which gives the Old Testament its exceptional position. It stands in an exceptionally close connection with the religion founded by One in whose life, whose teaching, whose religious consciousness the conscience of mankind has recognised, and recognises still, the highest manifestation, the highest representation and incarnation of God Himself. We read and reverence the New Testament because it is the source of all that we know about Christ. We must not, indeed, talk as though revelation ended with Christ. Christ Himself (if we may regard the representation of the Fourth Gospel as being not altogether without historical foundation) taught that the same Spirit which was poured out without measure upon Him, would live and move in the religious society which He was founding; and that the work of that Spirit was necessary to bring home and adapt to the

wants of successive ages what He had taught. "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Christianity now means to us much besides the *ipsissima verba* of Christ Himself or of His immediate Apostles; it has taken up into itself much that is good and true from other sources, but all that is most essential in it has grown out of what was done and said by the historic Christ. In the mind and character of Christ we still see the highest revelation of God. The testimony of the Spirit—the Spirit of God working in individuals and in human society—to the unique character of the revelation which has been made to us in Christ, must ever be the true basis, the true evidence of Christianity. The history of revelation is simply the religious history of the world, as it presents itself to the real believer in a personal God, and a God revealed in a personal Christ, the history of the world as a history of gradual and progressive self-revelation to mankind. Inspiration is gradual; it is progressive; it admits of degrees; it culminates and centres in the revelation through Christ and (let us not forget to add) the continuous revelation to the Church which He founded. Such seems, then, to be the view to which we are led alike by a survey of the religious history of mankind and by the teaching of the Epistle from which my text is taken. God revealed Himself not all at once, not equally to all, but by divers portions and in divers manners, and all previous revelation was a preparation for the revelation in which God has spoken to us by His Son.

XVIII.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son."—HEB. i. 1, 2 (R.V.).

XVIII.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

REVELATION is gradual. Revelation is progressive. Revelation admits of degrees. Such was the view of revelation in general at which we arrived last Sunday. And it is the view which has the sanction of the writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews. God spake to the fathers "by divers portions and in divers manners,"—piecemeal, imperfectly, progressively.

And the revelation was made pre-eminently through the prophets. It is a mistake, no doubt, to speak of the truth that is attained by the ordinary operation of the human intellect as though that came to us without God. All truth in a sense comes from God, especially the truth about God. But it is natural and reasonable that we should especially associate the idea of revelation with exceptional men,—the men in whom the moral or the religious faculty is most developed, the men of spiritual insight, the men of religious genius, the men who have taken the great forward steps in religious development,—the teachers, the leaders, the prophets. It is especially with such men's minds that we associate the idea of revelation or inspiration.

And such men have not all been men of the Jewish race. Assuredly, if the idea of inspiration is to mean anything at all to us, it cannot be limited to the contents of the Old and New Testaments. It was natural that the writer of our Epistle, a Jew writing to Jews, should think primarily of the revelation to the Jewish prophets—the fullest and most important revelation which the world was to receive before the coming of Christ. But the principle that God had spoken to others than Jews is not without recognition, even in the pages of the New Testament itself. The Gentiles, St. Paul recognised, who listened to the voice of conscience had the work of the law written in their hearts;[1] and the Fourth Gospel recognises in the person of Christ the full and complete incarnation of the same Word of God who had been gradually revealing Himself to man in creation, in reason, in conscience, as well as in the law and the prophets—"the light which lighteth every man coming into the world."[2] Still more explicit are the philosophically educated Greek Fathers. Philosophy they describe very much as St. Paul does the Jewish law, as a divinely appointed schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. And in a Catechism of the modern Greek Church—a Catechism published by authority of the Synod of the Holy Orthodox Church in Athens[3]—I rejoice to read the following answer: "Jesus Christ came into the world after many ages of preparation. The Jews were

[1] Rom. ii. 15. [2] John i. 9 (R.V.).
[3] A translation has been published by the S.P.C.K.

prepared by God for the coming of Jesus Christ through the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets . . . but the Gentiles were prepared through men of great reasoning power and wisdom,—to wit, Socrates, Plato, and others,—who perceived the wrongness of worshipping many gods, and whose minds were lifted up to the idea of one God."

Why then do we associate the idea of revelation in a special sense with the books known as the Old and New Testaments? How far can we justify the exceptional and pre-eminent position accorded to those collections in the teaching and worship and reverence of the Christian Church? Let me in some brief way attempt a plain answer to these questions — this Sunday as to the Old Testament, next Sunday as to the New.

The Old Testament is a record of the religious history of the Jewish people. We should look for revelation or inspiration rather in the religious and ethical ideas which it records, and in the minds which were possessed by these ideas, than in any special personal endowment of the individual who chanced to put those ideas into writing. That is a principle which I think it is important to insist on. We now know that the composition of the books of the Old Testament was a much more gradual and complicated affair than was once supposed. Many of the books of the Old Testament are compilations from various earlier works put together by one editor, or perhaps several successive editors. But from a religious point

of view it matters little to us who wrote them. The measure of their inspiration is simply the measure of the divine truth which they contain. The books are the record of a revelation, rather than the revelation itself.

The Old Testament is a record of one great branch of the world's religious history, that history which from one point of view is the continuous, though broken and intermittent, self-revelation of God to the world. One great branch of the whole current. But why that branch more than any other? Why is the religious history of the Jews more important to us than any other section of pre-Christian history? The history of Israel is of exceptional importance—for two reasons:

1. On account of its own intrinsic value. The Jewish nation was the first of the nations of the earth to attain to the monotheistic faith—to believe in one God, and to conceive of that God as wholly spiritual and wholly righteous. Philosophers you may find here and there who had had glimpses at least of the same truth; certainly, a little later, there were non-Jewish philosophers who taught pure and high monotheism quite independently of Jewish or Christian influence. But Judaism was the first great monotheistic religion; that by itself gives the religious literature of the Jews an exceptional and imperishable place in the history of the world. We now know better than we once did how slowly and gradually this supreme truth was reached. The re-

ligion of Israel was once not very different from the religion of surrounding peoples. Jehovah or Yahweh (as we are now taught to say) was originally a tribal God; and though the history of Israel in its present form has been edited by purely monotheistic compilers, you will still find much language in the Old Testament which seems to suggest that the Jews thought of their God rather as more powerful and beneficent than the gods of the surrounding nations, than as the only true God among a host of pretended or unreal gods. But slowly and gradually the Jews, under the guidance of highly inspired prophets, attained first to what has been called monolatry, *i.e.* to the worship of their national god to the exclusion of all others, and then to monotheism pure and simple. They came to identify their national god with the one only God of the world, the Creator, the purely spiritual Being whose will is expressed in the moral law; while as to the gods many and lords many of the heathen, "their idols are silver and gold, even the work of men's hands. They have mouths, and speak not; eyes have they, and see not. They have ears, and hear not; noses have they, and smell not; . . . neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; and so are all such as put their trust in them."[1] Slowly and gradually was this high faith attained even by the most inspired minds; still more slowly was it communicated to the nation at large. Only after the Exile did the

[1] Ps. cxv. 4–8 (Prayer-Book).

higher religion of the prophets become the religion of the whole nation,—perhaps we ought strictly to say of that comparatively small section of the nation which was carried into captivity. But revelation is no less revelation because it is gradual, because it comes in very small fragments to many different minds —"by divers portions and in divers manners." We read and reverence the Old Testament, then, because it contains the first, the most classical—among pre-Christian writings the most sublime and most inspired —expression of the pure theistic faith, the faith in one all-righteous God, and of that higher and stricter morality which is the natural accompaniment of faith in a righteous God.

To the last, no doubt, some elements of imperfection clung to the Jewish monotheism. High as the second Isaiah's ideas of God rose above that of the angry, revengeful, jealous God of early Judaism, though he looked to the time when the nations should "fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun,"[1] it was always as the subject vassals of Israel that the Gentiles were to be privileged to worship at the shrine of Israel's God. "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: . . . for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish."[2] Moreover, side by side with the increasing spirituality and universalism of prophetic teaching, we can trace also the growth of an ever stricter and narrower

[1] Isa. lix. 19. [2] Isa. lx. 10, 12.

insistence upon ritual details and legal ordinances, which culminated in the Pharisaism of our Lord's time. To set Judaism free from these fetters and restrictions, to moralise, to spiritualise, to universalise the teaching of Judaism, was the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. And this fact suggests the second of the reasons which place the religious literature of the Jews in an exceptional position. It stands in a closer and more intimate relation than any other section of religious history with the career of Him in whom we believe that the self-revelation of God to the world has reached its central point. For those to whom the teaching of Jesus occupies a unique position in the world's history, the Old Testament must necessarily be a subject of especial interest and study. Even what is weakest, what is most primitive, most barbaric, least spiritual in the Old Testament, must be known, if we would understand the teaching of Christ. We must know what the Jewish law was, if we would understand Christ's denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees. We must know the limitations of Judaism, the narrowness and exclusiveness of its creed, if we would understand how Christ transcended and universalised it in His teaching about God as the common Father of all men. And then, as to the highest elements in the Old Testament, the teaching of Christ and His apostles presupposes them. We rarely find Christ explicitly teaching the unity of God, the duty of obedience to His will, the law of purity and other elementary laws of morality; for all these truths were

universally accepted by the Jewish nation, to which, primarily, Christ's teaching was addressed. Historically, Judaism is the presupposition of Christianity; educationally, the Old Testament is the natural introduction to the New.

How far should the view of revelation which I have taken, which we are all (I imagine) more or less unconsciously coming to take, modify our practical use of the Old Testament?

1. In the first place, I think it should lead us to distinguish more deliberately between different parts of the Old Testament. If the Old Testament is the record of a religious evolution, we cannot expect that all parts of it should be equally edifying. I could wish that this principle had been better attended to by those who compiled the table of First Lessons for Sundays which we now use. A revised table of First Lessons is, it seems to me, one of the most pressing needs of the Church of England at the present moment. It is not profitable to go on reading Sunday after Sunday sanguinary stories from the wars of the Jews and similar unedifying narratives. But if we do read them, it is well to remember that we are reading the history of the Jewish nation compiled long after the events, by writers who cannot always be regarded as critical historians, and whose narrative is deeply coloured by their own very imperfect and undeveloped religious ideas. It is just these theological ideas, indeed, which give the narratives the whole of their religious value. But then we must

remember that not only are these stories not always authentic history, but the moral and theological ideas by which the narrative is coloured were very imperfect ideas—ideas which are in much need of correction in the light of that higher revelation which in the fulness of time God made by His Son. Christians cannot, for instance, suppose that God by a direct miraculous interposition ordered the destruction of the Canaanites. The Christian mind has always been puzzled and perplexed by the moral aspect of the Old Testament. It has, indeed, generally (alas! not always or adequately) been acknowledged that Christians must not take all the actions of Old Testament heroes or the ethical teaching of all Old Testament writers as examples or precepts for their own guidance. *That* they could not suppose without making the revelation in Christ superfluous or misleading, or without falling into the idea that the fundamental laws of morality are liable to be changed from time to time by arbitrary divine decree. But still the difficulty could not wholly be removed while people thought of inspiration as a gift of infallibility. Surely it should be a positive relief to feel that, in the light of modern criticism, we are no longer bound to accept as historical facts narratives presupposing conceptions of the divine nature which all Christians have abandoned. And this principle cannot be too constantly borne in mind in teaching the Old Testament to children. Let them, I should venture to say, be taught plainly from the first the imperfection of

Old Testament morality. Let them be taught as little as possible that they will inevitably have to unlearn. Let them be taught from the first to look upon the Old Testament in a very different light from that in which they look upon the New. It would be a good thing, perhaps, that they should have the New Testament put into their hands in a separate volume from the Old.

2. It is not natural that modern Christians, though they will, of course, read the Old Testament histories as literature and as history,—history, of course, which, like all other ancient history, must be read in the light of criticism, — should regard the Pentateuch or the Book of Judges with the same reverence with which they were regarded by militant Puritans, or should feel driven to make them edifying by reading into the lives of the patriarchs, for instance, the most forced and improbable morals. On the other hand, the modern study of the Bible has only made us understand all the better the immense spiritual value of the prophetic teaching. The law had its place, of course, in the education of Israel and of the world; but St. Paul always taught that that place was a very subordinate one. It was the prophets who created what may be called the higher Judaism. It is from the prophets that modern Christians may best learn those lessons which must be the necessary basis of every higher Christian theology or morality,—from their stern teaching about the unity and the holiness of God, and the justice of His government;

their tremendous denunciations of cruelty, oppression, or inordinate luxury (or let us say in modern language, of the inordinate haste to be rich, of unscrupulous company-promoting, of sweating, of taking high rents for insanitary house property, and the like); their solemn enforcement of the elementary, but, alas! in these days how difficult, social virtues—of paying a just wage, of commercial honesty, of mercy and charity to the poor, and moderation in expenditure upon self. "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work!"[1] Modern society assuredly has much to learn from the prophets before we can say that all these things we have kept from our youth, and begin to ask what more is demanded by the Christian gospel of universal brotherhood. Christians, then, should read the prophets and the Psalms more than the histories, and in the prophets especially those parts which are most inspiring, most practical, most Christian.

In the prophets, as preachers of pure monotheism and of personal righteousness, the inspiration of the ancient world attained its highest level. On the ethical side—perhaps even on the theological side—we might find passages of some few non-Jewish teachers not unworthy of comparison with them. But in one respect Jewish literature is unique—as a literature of devotion. Socrates and Cicero had noble

[1] Jer. xxii. 13.

things to say about God and about duty;—*devotion*, and all that side of character which is cultivated and stimulated by devotion, was scarcely known to them. Even the Christian Church has never succeeded in creating a literature of devotion to take the place of the Psalms, though it has read new and higher meanings into their words.

These seem, then, to be a few of the ways in which that wider view of revelation to which modern knowledge leads us should modify our religious use of the Old Testament. And they are only new applications of a principle which no era of the Christian Church could ever formally have denied—the principle of the subordination of Old Testament revelation to the New. In one sense, no doubt, Christ came to fulfil and not to destroy. But it is true also that "the law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached."[1]

[1] Luke xvi. 16.

XIX.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

"He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*."—JOHN iii. 34.

XIX.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I HAVE been trying in my last two sermons to lead you to a view of revelation in which the old hard and fast distinction between revealed and unrevealed, inspired and uninspired, mere natural knowledge and wholly supernatural knowledge, disappears; in which we recognise all moral and spiritual truth as inspired, as coming from God whenever it comes and to whomsoever it comes. From this point of view the place of any such hard and fast distinction will be taken by a distinction of degree. The Bible becomes to be not an inspired book among uninspired books, but an exceptionally inspired book, or rather an exceptionally inspired series of books.

So far as the Old Testament is concerned, the altered views of revelation which the fuller knowledge and minuter study have brought with them, does, I believe, really bring a sense of relief to many Christian minds. It comes as a relief to them to feel no longer obliged to apologise for the treachery of Jael or to detect far-fetched typical meanings in the minutiæ of Hebrew ritual. A bolder recognition of the imperfection of the Old Testament has

only thrown into relief the spirituality and completeness of the New. Many people would be willing, no doubt, to accept the wider point of view of revelation as regards the Old Testament, provided only that they may still regard the New Testament as containing a revelation of God in a unique and paramount sense. How far, then, I propose to ask to-day, can we accord such a position to the New Testament? For argument and discussion of particular problems of history or criticism there will be no time, but I trust it will not be useless to try to give a direct and connected answer to the question, "In what sense can we regard the New Testament as something unique, exceptional, unlike other books?" The answer, I think, is that we can and ought to regard the New Testament with unique and exceptional reverence, provided we remember one or two principles on which I have already insisted.

1. In the first place, it is of absolute importance to bear in mind that it is not the words of the book, but the moral and spiritual truths contained in it, that constitute the measure of its inspiration. "It is not books that are inspired, but men."[1] And the exceptional and peculiar inspiration which we recognise in the New Testament ought to be found not so much in its actual writers, as in the teaching of Him about whom they wrote. It is not St. Mark or St. Luke to whose teaching we attach exceptional importance, but

[1] This principle has been insisted upon by the Bishop of Worcester and others.

Jesus Christ. It is in the life and character and teaching of Jesus that the conscience of humanity recognises the highest and fullest revelation of God's nature that the world has ever received. I must not stay to ask in detail why we place Christ in this unique position. I assume that we do so; and as to our reasons for doing so, I will say only that they must be found in the last resort simply and solely in the appeal which the moral and religious consciousness of Christ makes to our own moral and religious consciousness. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."[1] "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit."[2] It is only the measure of the Spirit, the measure of moral and spiritual insight, which is given to each individual or to the Church of God collectively, that can recognise the exceptional outpouring of the Spirit in the Person of Jesus Christ. If, then, we do feel that Jesus is more to us, has been and still is more to the world, than any other of those great teachers on whom the Spirit of God has rested,—just in proportion to the strength of that conviction will the books that tell us about Him be treasured and prized by us.

2. Secondly, we have even more need to apply our principle of degrees of inspiration within the limits of the New Testament than we had in the case of the Old. It is because these books tell us about

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 11. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 3 (R.V.).

Christ that we accord to them an exceptional reverence; and it is in proportion as they tell us about Christ that we must regard them in that light. It is rather a pity, in some ways, that we have lost the old medieval habit of treating the Gospels with special and peculiar reverence. The difficulty of procuring copies of the Gospels by themselves has led, for instance, insensibly and imperceptibly to the habit of swearing upon and kissing the whole New Testament. In the Middle Ages it was the Gospels alone that men touched as the symbol of their faith. But, of course, it would be a crude application of our principle of degrees of inspiration if we were merely to assume that the Gospels as a whole were more inspired and more authoritative than the Epistles. The principle for which I have contended will compel us to draw a distinction between the words of Christ and the mere glosses or comments or interpretations of the Evangelists. And then modern criticism will not let us take even the Gospel discourses as being all of them equally a faultless record of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. I believe that the general result of sober criticism is that we have in the Gospel records a substantially trustworthy account of the life and still more of the teaching of Christ. They present us with a picture of a unique personality, and that personality is, as critics are more and more generally admitting, a historical personality, not the gradual growth of myth-making imagination. But it is quite consistent with this view to recognise that this or

that incident in the recorded life of Christ is unhistorical or exaggerated; that this version of some saying or discourse of Christ is more accurate than that; that one Gospel is more trustworthy for the sayings of Christ, and another for His doings, and so on.

At the same time, if we compare the Gospels together, we do undoubtedly find discrepancies. Inconsistent versions of an incident or of a saying cannot both be true. Unless we attribute to the Evangelists a mechanical inspiration, an infallible memory, and an infallible judgment, which they do not claim for themselves, we are perfectly free to accept or reject particular narratives which there is reason for questioning, without being bound to reject other narratives which there is no reason for rejecting. The most precious parts of the teaching attributed to Christ possess a self-evidencing originality which no criticism can shake. If we are faithful to our principle, that the unique authority of the Gospels is due only to what they tell us of Christ, we shall be thankful for any criticism which helps us to get closer to the very words of the Master than those do who treat the Gospels—all of them equally and equally in every part—as *verbatim* reports of the Master's utterances. And for those who feel that they have no leisure or inclination or capacity for going behind the written letter, let me add that if they read the New Testament to get real spiritual light, to find out what manner of men they ought to

be, they may do so with absolute confidence. That which really appeals to them spiritually, that which commends itself to their conscience, is probably in substance the teaching of Christ; or, if it is not, that is not a matter of the very first importance. For there is another principle which we ought to bear in mind—the principle of development.

3. That represents the third of the rules which we ought to apply to our use of the New Testament. We must remember that our Lord's teaching required to be developed and applied through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The writers of the New Testament, when they go beyond Christ's own words, represent the beginnings of this development. It is the nearness in which they stood to the supreme Revealer, and the greater opportunities they enjoyed of catching His spirit, that command a reverence which we do not accord to the writings of later teachers. We all recognise this, I think, with regard to the Epistles. We see in them the impression which Christ's teaching made on the first generation of His hearers, their applications of it to the life and organisation of His Church, the first attempts to formulate and express the Church's sense of the unique importance of Christ and His teaching—in a word, the beginnings of Christian dogma. But this principle of development was at work to some extent even in the Gospels themselves. In the Fourth Gospel particularly it is impossible altogether to separate the actual teaching of the Master from the Evangelist's commentary upon it. Text and commen-

tary are fused into one. But because we can trust St. John's discourses as the *ipsissima verba* of Christ less than the discourses of the three other Gospels, that is no reason why we should not recognise in them a legitimate development of the Master's teaching. For instance, I see no insuperable difficulty in supposing that our Lord may have said, "I am the light of the world." Later parts of that great discourse no doubt show unmistakable signs of St. John's peculiar style and mannerism; yet it is not impossible that those first words may represent a genuine saying of Christ. But suppose Christ did not say, "I am the light of the world." If Christ really was the light of the world, if the Evangelist had the insight and penetration to grasp that truth, we may still read that marvellous chapter with the same glow of emotion and of thankfulness with which it has been read by the countless multitude to whom Christ was much and criticism nothing. The first three Evangelists are doubtless more accurate reporters of the very words of Christ; doubtless they present us with a better picture of His actual method and manner of teaching. But it is a higher, not a lower, degree of inspiration that enabled St. John to divine and to express so nobly all that Christ has been to the world,—all that He ought to be, and still may be to us. And the inspiration will be the same, if we suppose that some disciple of St. John was the actual author of that wonderful Gospel.

The New Testament, besides preserving the actual picture of Christ's historic personality, represents the

beginnings of that development which He Himself (it may be) led His disciples to expect. For obvious reasons, the beginnings of that development possess, broadly speaking, exceptional importance. But they are not all equally important, not all equally faithful to the spirit of the Master. We are quite free to recognise that St. Paul's magnificent grasp on the universalism (to use the modern phrase) of Christ's teaching is of more importance than his low estimate of marriage; that the Apocalypse (doubtless compiled out of Jewish materials by a Christian hand) has less in it of the spirit of Christ than the Johannine Epistles. And we shall be quite prepared to recognise, as the early Church recognised, that the line which separates the least well attested or the least intrinsically valuable book inside the Canon from many books that lie outside it is a shadowy and a shifting one. We are quite free to say that the second of the Epistles attributed to St. Peter, which many Churches long rejected, contains less valuable Christian teaching than the stirring First Epistle of Clement or the mystic "Shepherd of Hermas," which many Churches long read as canonical Scripture. Roughly speaking, we recognise the sound instinct which guided the selection of the books which were to be read in churches, and to be regarded as the standards of Christian faith and practice. And some such selection was obviously necessary for practical purposes. But we must not let the idea of a sacred Canon stand between us and the recognition either of the unique authority of

Christ Himself or of the continuous inspiration of His Church. Christ should be looked upon as the centre (as it were) of inspiration. The prophets before Christ pointed to Him; the prophets after Christ start from Him, look back to Him, take their stand upon Him. But the revelation of God to the world goes on still. The Spirit which was poured out without measure upon Him is still given, in different ways and in different measures, to the sons of men.

One naturally shrinks from speaking in a way which may seem, even to a few, to be what people call "preaching against the Bible." But I believe it is impossible to teach people clearly what the Bible is unless we do sometimes say also, with some plainness of speech, what the Bible is not. The Bible has far more to fear from dishonest apologetics and vague evasive platitudes, than it has from the fullest proclamation of the truth about it. Let me illustrate the point by a parallel case. I take no pleasure in harping upon the defects of other communions. But it is a fact that the Church of Rome claims to be infallible, and yet surely commands among educated people less influence and less belief in her dogmas than other Churches secure which claim less for themselves. Let us not doubt that it will be so with the Bible. The way to persuade people that the Bible is simply an obsolete collection of folk-lore and old wives' fables, is to tell them, or to let them think, that the Bible contains no mistakes, and that all parts of it are of equal value.

It must be recognised that it is less easy for us than was once the case to extract from the Bible that spiritual help and strength which it is still able to afford. It demands effort, and intellectual effort; and there is nothing that most men shrink from more than intellectual effort. Superstition is pleasant, because it saves people so much trouble. When once the critical faculty has been awakened, it is scarcely possible that the Bible can be to us all that it may once have been, unless we make the intellectual effort to understand it better; to understand it better than it is understood either by unquestioning orthodoxy or self-satisfied and self-complacent scepticism. If I speak to anyone who is all at sea in such matters, who wants to know more about what I may call the modern view of the New Testament, and yet does not know where to turn to read about it, let me suggest to him as books to begin upon, the now classical *Ecce Homo*,[1] and Bishop Moorhouse's admirable little work, *The Teaching of Jesus.*

And yet I am far from suggesting that the New Testament has lost its direct spiritual and practical value to those who simply read it day by day as a message from God, as a source of guidance and inspiration, with a view of definitely finding out what God wills them to do day by day, and of keeping ever before their minds the example of Christ, the thought of God, the reality of the spiritual world.

[1] I quite recognise the critical defects of *Ecce Homo*, but critical progress has not done much to impair its spiritual value.

Yes, if it is really spiritual guidance that you are in search of, you are not likely to go wrong, either because you know nothing of what is called modern thought, or because, knowing something of it, your mind is filled with doubts and questioning about historical and critical difficulties, — if it is really spiritual guidance that you want, and not texts to fling at the head of theological opponents. It is only because I fear that many, having discovered that the regular reading or hearing of the Bible is not a charm which works like magic, have given up that precious habit, that I am anxious to insist that, though not a spiritual charm, it is, intelligently used, a spiritual food and a spiritual medicine.

Does anyone say or think, "There are other books—non-Christian books—which are spiritually as edifying as the Bible"? I do not think many people have really found them so. But, granted that they are, do you read those books? Do you read them, I mean, regularly and systematically, as Christian people read the Bible? Is it Marcus Aurelius that some one would suggest as a practical substitute for the Bible, or some Buddhist scripture which (without perhaps knowing more than its name) the dabbler in comparative religion alleges to contain ethical teaching as high as that of the New Testament? Doubtless in these books too are to be found some things which holy men have written as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But do you read Marcus Aurelius or your Buddhist scripture, or do you read anything

to remind you, daily, regularly, at a fixed hour, of the duties and the aspirations that are so easily forgotten, to strengthen you against the temptations that surround you in the day's work, to prevent you sinking ever more deeply and more hopelessly into the slough of worldliness and self-indulgence? Till you have discovered a literature which you find by practical experience to answer all these purposes better than the Psalms and the New Testament, let me plead that you do not give up the habit of reading or hearing some small portion of the Bible—of those parts of the Bible which we find to be of most direct spiritual value to us—at regular intervals; every day is the natural thing and the easiest. The late Professor Tyndall used, it is said, to read through the Sermon on the Mount once a fortnight. When it has recovered from the shock of new ideas in history and science, I do not think that the world will be anxious to restrict so severely as that its Canon of Holy Scripture. But the principle of the agnostic professor's habit was sound. He felt that the spiritual life required systematic cultivation; and he read what appealed to him most. Let us go and do likewise.

XX.

MISSIONS.

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"—1 Cor. iv. 7.

XX.

MISSIONS.[1]

RECENT lamentable events in China have brought into prominence the whole question of Foreign Missions, and our duty towards them.

The subject is one which is directly suggested by to-day's festival of the Epiphany, and I do not know that if I were to go in search of a subject appropriate to the first Sunday of the new century, I should be likely to find a more appropriate one than the question whether the Christianity of the twentieth century is to be a missionary Christianity or not; and therefore I propose this morning to examine a few of the objections which one constantly hears urged as excuses, I will not say merely for neglect and indifference, but for the active contempt and almost ferocious hostility which the very name of a missionary seems often to arouse in the minds of otherwise benevolent and well-meaning people.

A priori one might perhaps have expected that self-sacrificing efforts to promote the moral and spiritual improvement of the backward races of mankind might have commanded at least a respectful

[1] Preached in Westminster Abbey, Sunday, Jan. 6, 1901.

sympathy on the part even of people who do not share the strictly theological side of the missionary's creed. Whatever a missionary is or does, he at least devotes his life to non-material objects. Of course it would be affectation to deny that the amount of self-sacrifice which the missionary calling demands, depends a good deal upon circumstances. But it is just where the sacrifice is greatest, and where the risk and hardship involved are most serious, that sympathy for missionary zeal often seems to be most conspicuously absent. It is the young man whose prospects at home are brightest who is thought to be most obviously throwing himself away when he becomes a missionary. It is the occurrence of some disaster like the recent deplorable massacre in China which produces the fiercest outcries against the waste of money and life in such foolhardy enterprises. I must say I find it difficult to listen with patience to such talk in the mouths of men who would regard the name of Little Englander as a term of reproach. What would be said of a public speaker who deliberately dissuaded young men from going into the army because it involves the chance of being shot? What would be said of a statesman who urged the abandonment of some important outpost of the Empire because the climate was unhealthy? Are we to say that the promotion of British trade, the provision of new openings for British capital and of new markets for British commerce, are objects for which it is worth while sacrificing (if need be) millions of money and hundreds of

lives; whereas the planting of infant Churches, the Christianising of nations, the vast indirect moral effects which spring from missionary work, are objects upon which it is pure waste to spend a few odd guineas, and almost criminal to permit the sacrifice of perhaps half a dozen missionaries a year? Do such little-minded pleas deserve any answer but the indignant exclamation of the Apostle: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Where should we be now if the Apostles and their followers had stopped to count the cost of their wild dream of Christianising that great civilising empire of Rome, to whose position in the world we have in some measure succeeded?

But, it will be said, modern missionaries are not so successful as the Apostles or the missionaries of the first three centuries. I am not quite sure that the contrast in this respect between ancient and modern missions is as great as is sometimes supposed. I confess I do not admire the spirit which makes nice calculations as to the number of conversions effected by a given number of missionaries in a given time, and which then proceeds to calculate how much per head it costs to convert black men or white men, and to ask whether after all it is worth the expense. I do not believe that the value of spiritual work can be estimated by arithmetical tests. The best modern missionaries regard the spread of humanity, the higher morality, the vague Christian sentiment, the dim groping after God, which everywhere follow upon

earnest missionary effort, as even more important than the number of actual converts. But if you will have it so, take down your Whitaker's Almanac, and you will find that there are over 2,280,000 Christians in India alone—for the most part owing to the mission work of less than a century. It may be doubted whether there were a larger number of Christians in the world after the first century of Christian preaching.

Then we have the plea that native Christians are made no better than they were before. It is a little difficult to believe that men who (like the Christians in China at the present time) show themselves willing to die in hundreds for their faith, are so very much below the moral level of their European critics. But it is true, no doubt, that a nominal, or even a very sincere change of religious profession does bring with it some moral dangers. Can we doubt, as we read St. Paul's Epistles, that there were some baptized Corinthians who were little the better for their conversion? Certainly, at the time of the Reformation, there were plenty of people to whom Protestantism meant nothing but an emancipation from unwelcome restraints. And yet some of us still believe that the Reformation was not altogether a mistake. And, of course, no wise defender of missions will doubt that missionaries, like statesmen, have made many mistakes. The attempt to interfere with politics or with the course of native justice is one of them. That is a mistake which, I trust, has

rarely been made by the missionaries of our own or any Protestant community. But, after all, this disparagement does not usually come from those who have known best the lives of the peoples affected, or from those who have investigated the whole matter from a broad and statesmanlike point of view. Permit me on this occasion to call but one witness. Mr. Bryce has testified to the fact that the unpopularity of the missionaries in South Africa is due almost entirely to their efforts to secure decent treatment for the natives; and that the missionaries are simply the only civilising and humanising agency at work among the people whose native customs and traditional religions we are destroying.[1] Whether we like it or not, the lower native religions, with all the traditional and customary morality that is associated with them, are visibly crumbling away before the influence of European ideas. The process is taking place at an alarming rate in South Africa. It has *begun* even with the much higher and stronger civilisation of India. The old religions are going. Let those who think they can supply something to take their place better than Christianity, by all means try its effect. But, as things actually stand, the alternative in most cases is between Christianity and nothing at all. And that may serve for an answer to those who object to missions from a philosophical and large-minded respect for other religions than their own. It is not, of course,

[1] *Impressions of South Africa*, chap. xxii.

necessary to say that any one, at least of the higher religions of mankind, contains no religious truth or has no ethical value. Very few modern missionaries adopt that attitude towards the religions with which they come in contact. But whatever interpretation he may give to Christianity, it is difficult to see how a man can call himself a Christian at all unless he believes about Christianity at least these two things —(*a*) that it represents the highest and completest body of religious truth in existence, embracing in itself, or capable ultimately of absorbing into itself, all the elements of truth contained in other religions; and (*b*) that it is a universal religion—intended and adapted not for this or that nation, but for all the world. I need hardly say that this belief in the universality and permanence of the Christian religion does not imply that there has been, or that there will be in the future, no growth or development in that religion. The belief in the continuous working of the Spirit of God in human society is an essential article of the Christian faith. The critics and the philosophers who have dealt most destructively with traditional Christianity have almost invariably left this much — the universalism, as they call it, of Christianity. Because there is some truth in all the higher religions of mankind, that is no reason why we should not teach their adherents more truth. If we confine ourselves simply to the moral test, if we merely believe in Christian morality (which after all *is* different, in some ways, from the morality taught by

any other religion), it would surely be a duty to teach that morality to others.

But then it may be objected, "Oh yes! Our religion and our morality are good enough — good enough for superior people like ourselves, but much too good for black men." Sometimes, no doubt, there is nothing more in this feeling than an insolent and wholly unchristian objection to the admission of inferior races to our own religious privileges, to teaching them a religion which seems to recognise their claim to be treated as it is admitted that fellow-Christians ought to be treated. At other times the objection appeals to a vague intellectual prejudice against interfering with the natural course of development. That blessed word Evolution is dragged in to justify leaving things to take their own course without interference on our part. That modern goddess Evolution, like more ancient deities, is often invoked to save trouble to the lazy. It is worth while, perhaps, to point out that Evolution—when that word is applied to the development of rational beings and of a society composed of rational beings—is made up of "interferences." All rational action, in one sense, is an interference with the course of nature. The alternative is not between interfering or not interfering, but between interfering in one way and interfering in another. But for our present purpose it is more directly to the point to insist that the idea of a natural and necessary tendency to progress in human society is quite unsupported by historical facts.

There is not the slightest reason to believe that the natives of Africa or India, if left alone, would ever evolve Christianity for themselves, or anything which our least sympathetic critics could possibly regard as a satisfactory substitute for Christianity. It is only a few of the races of mankind which are progressive beyond a certain point. The progress of the human race at large has taken place partly by the more developed races substituting themselves for the unprogressive, partly by the higher races communicating their civilisation, their morality, their religion, to the lower. And that is exactly what we are doing now by means of missions; but that is exactly what we do not do when we come into contact with natives merely in the way of conquest or of trade. Once again we may fall back upon St. Paul's "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" There is no argument which can be used against preaching the gospel of Christ to the natives of India or of Africa which could not have been used against Pope Gregory's quixotic scheme for converting our barbarous forefathers to the religion of civilised Rome. This civilisation, which we think qualifies us for Christianity and entitles us to keep it to ourselves, is the result of the very policy which our stay-at-home Christianity condemns. There is not the slightest reason to believe that we should have evolved a civilised Christianity for ourselves had Gregory thought the religion of Wodin good enough for Saxon barbarians, or had St. Augustine confined

his energies (as we are often told our clergy ought to do) to preaching the gospel to the practical heathen nearer home. Doubtless there were as many of them in the streets of sixth century Rome as in the slums of Westminster to-day!

There is one other theoretical objection to a missionary Christianity which seldom expresses itself in so many words, but which, I feel sure, is really at the bottom of the tendency to depreciate mission work on the part of liberal-minded Christians. There may have been a time when the duty of mission work was advocated on the ground that the heathen who died without having heard or accepted the gospel message were doomed to everlasting flames. Undoubtedly the progress of Christianity has been, and is still, grievously hindered (especially among the more educated races and classes) by the intellectual narrowness of many missionaries and more missionary societies (that is one of the things that must be mended in the twentieth century); but I doubt very much whether there is a single missionary living who really believes or teaches such a doctrine as that at the present day. And yet it is sometimes supposed that when once we have shaken off this grotesque and blasphemous theory, the rationale of missionary enterprise has disappeared. I have even heard a quite well-educated and in all other relations of life intelligent man solemnly argue that it was best to leave the heathen alone. If they were allowed to die without so much as hearing the gospel message,

there might be a hope for them, he seemed to think (his theology had advanced so far); but if we preached to them and they rejected the message, then there could be no escape from the inevitable doom. I really do not know which of these two views represents the more lamentable travesty of what Christianity really is. Both of them spring from the fundamental mistake of thinking of Christianity as though it were good *only* as a passport to some future state, a sort of insurance against posthumous risks—and not at all because it is a good and happy thing to be a Christian *now*; as though it were not worth while to escape from sin, to live a pure and unselfish life, to know something of the meaning of communion with God for its own sake, quite apart from the misery which unrepented sin must needs bring with it here and hereafter. Because we believe that God is the common Father of all,—heathen as well as Christian, whether they know it or whether they know it not,—that surely is a miserably bad reason for not letting them know the good news that they have a Father in heaven!

We must believe that life is somehow for all human souls an education—even for those who die in the most degraded heathenism. Doubtless there is not the slightest ground for believing that the education which begins on earth will, either for heathen or for Christian, end with the last breath of earthly life. But are we to make no effort to improve the moral state of a man here because the door of hope may not

be closed by death? Are we deliberately to refuse to others the knowledge of God as He has been revealed to us by Christ, with all the saving influence which springs from that knowledge, because those who have not known God in this life may haply come to know Him hereafter? Might we not as reasonably refuse our help to the victim of some foul disease, because a year or even ten years hence it may not be too late to undertake his cure? Might not the same fatalistic reliance on the goodness of God be used as an argument against any other attempt to improve the condition of fellow-creatures whose well-being, spiritual, moral, physical, has visibly and obviously been made dependent upon our efforts by a God who calls upon us to be fellow-workers with Him?

This question of mission work may be a not unprofitable subject for our consideration, not only because it reminds us of the duty of taking our part in its promotion by systematic giving of money, not only because it may help to deter us from that contemptuous depreciation of missions which does so much to hinder men from becoming missionaries, not merely because to make up our minds about it is essential to a right judgment on many great questions of imperial policy, but also because it may serve to make us think what Christianity really is in itself, and what it ought to be to each one of us. Can our personal attitude to Christianity be what it ought to be, if it is even an open question with us whether it is a duty to proclaim its truth to others also? Can we hate sin

and selfishness as we ought to do, if we are inclined to excuse ourselves from fighting against sin in others by sophistical calculations as to the extent to which the guilt of sin may be mitigated by the sinner's ignorance? Can we care about our fellow-men as we admit Christianity tells us we ought to care about them, when we are content to leave their spiritual present and their spiritual future to what used to be called the uncovenanted mercies of God? We do not do that with our own children and friends, whether in temporal matters or in spiritual. Can we have known much of the value of the Christian life for its own sake, when we enter upon cold-blooded calculations as to whether Christianity is sufficiently better than Hinduism or Mohammedanism to be worth the cost of preaching it? Can we feel due gratitude to God for all that we have received as individuals and as a community, if we are in doubt whether it is or is not part of the "white man's burden," during the coming century, to extend those privileges of ours as widely as possible and as rapidly as possible to all the nations of the earth? Can we have any adequate idea of what is meant by that fundamental conception of all our Master's teaching—the kingdom of God—if we doubt whether or not it was intended that all the kingdoms of the world should one day become (so far as in us lies to make them) the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ?

XXI.

THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE STATE.

"He is a minister of God to thee for good."—Rom. xiii. 4 (R.V.).

XXI.

THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE STATE.

THE approaching Coronation brings before us in a vivid and significant manner the religious aspect of the State. It will, I trust, give a suitable direction to our thoughts this morning, if we glance briefly at the theories that have at various times been held as to the source of the duty which we owe to the State.

1. Little need be said about the theory—once the most cherished tenet of the Anglican Church — of the divine right of kings. The divine right to govern well or ill was originally vested (it was thought) in Adam, and thence descended, like a piece of real property, to Charles I. The theory of divine right is not really a very ancient one. It is not the theory of the Fathers, though there is a good deal in the Fathers to suggest it.[1] In the Middle

[1] The political ideas of the Fathers are admirably dealt with by the Rev. A. J. Carlyle in his *History of Mediæval Political Theory in the West*, vol. i., 1903. The Fathers often enjoined obedience even to bad rulers on the ground of divine appointment, but in them (1) the theory was not exclusive of other views, and (2) the authority was not conceived to be dependent upon heredity or any particular mode of appointment. It was the *de facto* ruler who possessed divine authority.

Ages it was only maintained by the Ghibeline defenders of the Holy Roman Empire, which was, of course, no hereditary monarchy ; and in such a defence of it as the famous *De Monarchia* of Dante, the argument so largely turns on rational and utilitarian considerations, that it almost passes on into the more intelligible view that all government is divine. It is not till much later—till the Stuart period, perhaps—that we encounter the extravagant view that a divine right to govern, well or ill, was originally vested in Adam, and so descended in the divine eldest male line to Charles I. Of this theory, as it appears in such writers as Sir Thomas Filmer, no more need now be said. The truth which lies at the bottom of it is, by general admission, simply the truth—a very important one, no doubt—that it is a moral, and therefore a religious, duty to obey the established secular authority. It does not help us to find the legitimate ruler, or determine the limits of our obedience to him.

2. Then, secondly, we have the theory that the duty of obeying the State arises from a convention or agreement by which primitive men, experiencing the manifold inconveniences involved in a war of every man with every man, covenanted with one another to obey a common superior. This is, in a sense, probably the answer which most naturally comes to a man, even now, the first time he sets himself down to think upon the subject. It is probably as old as the very first efforts at abstract political thinking. To say nothing

of Greek Sophists and Roman Stoics, we find it in the Fathers. St. Augustine, for instance, tells us that there is a "general agreement of human society to obey their respective kings."[1] This dictum of Augustine, embodied in the great medieval text-book of Canon Law, the *Decretum of Gratian*, became the authoritative theory of the Canonists, whence it descended to Hooker and Hobbes, to Locke and Rousseau. We may, of course, recognise in it a certain residuum of truth. No government could last for a day unless there were a tolerably general agreement to accept and obey it. But that consent may be a mere submission to superior force (like that of the traveller to the highwayman who demands his purse, pistol in hand), or the submission of complete apathy or of total ignorance. In any other sense this contract or convention is a pure fiction. When and where did the people of India, or even the people of England, agree to obey the King? Even on the very doubtful assumption that the privilege of having been outvoted in the election of a member of Parliament, who is again outvoted in that assembly, implies consent, when did the women of England agree to obey the Government? And then, if we suppose the promise to have been made, it will not prove that obedience is due, or even lawful. Why should the duty of keeping a promise be treated as the most obvious and primary of all duties? If government be a good thing, it is a duty to obey it whether you

[1] Aug. *Confess.* iii. c. 8; *Decret. Grat.*, Pt. I. Dist. viii. c. 2.

have promised to do so or not. If it is a bad thing, your promise to obey it will not justify even your own submission, still less your use of force to compel other people's submission. It may, no doubt, be very desirable that the established form of government should have the general consent of the people in its favour. When once a people has reached a certain level of moral and political maturity, it is not a good or healthy thing that it should be ruled from above, from without, by a despotic monarch or a foreign invader. We may welcome that picturesque feature of the coming ceremony when the people of England, represented in point of fact by the boys of Westminster School, will acclaim the King as the ruler of their own free choice. We may welcome it as a reminder of the fact that the English monarchy is older than the absurd theory of absolute hereditary right. We may welcome it as an emphatic assertion of the principle that the moral right of the monarchy, as of every other element in the constitution, depends upon its serving the end for which all governments exist. But, as a theory which is to explain the duty of loyalty or to determine its limits, the theory of a social contract, whether looked at in the light of history or in the light of reason, is only one degree less absurd than the theory of divine right. The best illustration of the arbitrary character of the whole theory is found in the history of its variations. The contract being a wholly imaginary affair, everybody has been free to draft its provisions according to his own ideas of what

government ought to be. In Hobbes the social contract theory is made the basis of unlimited absolutism in public life and private, in religious matters as well as secular. The "Sovereign" must not give away the government of doctrine, or the people will be "frighted into rebellion with the fear of spirits." In Locke the theory assumes a Whiggish hue. It transforms itself into a theory of constitutional government, of a government which is strictly bound to respect personal liberty, the rights of conscience, and above all the sacred rights of property. In Rousseau's hands the doctrine becomes the basis of extreme democracy—a democracy which discards altogether the representative principle—and doubtless he is only logical in insisting that, if a man can only be governed by his own consent, you must prove, not merely the consent of the majority, but of each individual citizen. For coercion by a majority demands just as much warranty as coercion by a minority.

I will not waste time in examining these theories further. The contract theory served a noble purpose once as a clumsy and confused expression of the idea that governments exist for the good of the governed, and that the governed have a right to see that they fulfil their purpose. But the theory has done its work. And yet much of the confusion which it produced still lingers among us. It would not be difficult to illustrate from recent political experience the injurious effects of the idea that a law can possess no moral claim to obedience unless it can be shown that every

person whose obedience is claimed has in some constructive way consented to its imposition, or that a rate need not be paid by anyone who has no personal sympathy with the purpose to which it is devoted. The theory is associated with an arbitrary limitation of the functions of government, which has been most universally abandoned. And yet, though the formal terminology of the social contract may not very often be heard, the spirit of it, the intellectual confusion which it implies, has, I fear, by no means disappeared. It shows itself from time to time in furious protests, even in threats of veiled rebellion, whenever the State proposes to disregard some fanciful theory of natural liberty. Now it is property, now it is the prevention of disease, now it is religion, now it is education, now it is some particular branch of education, that is supposed by some inherent law to lie beyond the province of the State. It is curious, it is melancholy, to hear the very people who are, to their infinite credit, always ready to assert the right and the duty of the State to enforce morality — Christian morality, I had almost said, denominational morality—not only upon its subjects, but upon other nations, and who, on other occasions, would be foremost to proclaim the intimate connection between religion and morality, crying out that the State has nothing to do with religious education—that an education with no religion in it at all is better than an education associated with some form of Christianity with which they do not happen to

sympathise. It is impossible to read such utterances without being reminded of the noble passage of Burke, which marks the transition to a higher view of the State:

"Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure, but the State ought not to be considered nothing more than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence, because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all arts; a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are dead and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular State is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures each in their appointed place." [1]

3. A contract which was never made and which

[1] *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

can never be dissolved has become a metaphor which modern writers have done well to discard. At the present day there is an all but universal consensus among serious thinkers to find the source of political obligation in the *end* which the State serves. If man were originally and by nature a mere self-seeking animal, not recognising and incapable of recognising a moral obligation, no sort of legal instrument could create such an obligation. For whence would come the duty of respecting it? But if man is essentially a social and a moral being, if the State be a necessary means to enable him to attain his end, then to obey the State becomes as obvious and immediate a duty, as religious a duty, as to perform any other act that is essential to the well-being of one's fellow-man. It is not my consent that constitutes my duty to obey. If the State's authority is conducive to the real good of my fellows, I am not free to refuse my consent. If it is not, no amount of consent could invest its behests with any moral authority. So far, there is a pretty general agreement. But there is still a great line of cleavage between those who hold this view of the matter. It is agreed that the State exists to promote the good of man. But what is that good? What is the true end of man?

If we think with the pure Utilitarian that the true good of man is simply to get as much enjoyment as possible, irrespective of what sort of enjoyment it is, then the object of the State must be simply to increase the sum of human pleasure. No State interference

will be justifiable which aims at any other end; indeed, it becomes very difficult to show why the individual should trouble his head about anybody's pleasure but his own. But if the end of man is something higher than mere enjoyment; if the true end of man includes the development of mind and of character; if his object be not merely happiness, but the best and noblest kind of happiness; if the true end of man be (in the words of the old Scotch Catechism), to know God, and to enjoy Him for ever,—then we get a widely increased field for the operations of the State. The State becomes no mere mutual assurance society for the preservation of person and property, but (as the old Greek thinker put it) a society for the promotion of virtue. No wonder that Christian philosophers like St. Thomas Aquinas have recognised how much nobler, how much more Christian a view of the State this gives us than the traditional contract theory of the medieval canonist. And it is a view to which slowly but surely the modern world is coming back. It may be reluctant to admit it. The capitalist may tremble at a theory which seems to put his accumulated wealth at the disposal of a democratic community. The narrower Nonconformist and the narrower Churchman may vie with one another in proclaiming the essential secularity of a State whose authority they are nevertheless always ready to employ for their own purposes. The individualist may catch at a one-sided view of evolution to justify a theory of the State, which, as the late Professor Huxley showed so

eloquently,[1] would, if really acted upon, reduce human society to a cock-pit in which the freest scope would be given to the instincts of the wolf and the hyena, while it inhibited at every turn the distinctively human qualities — the sympathy, the contrivance, the rationality, the morality, which have really made human society what it is. But in spite of all its unwillingness to accept the theory of Aristotle and of St. Thomas, the actual practice of the State is daily proclaiming that the individualism of the eighteenth century is a thing of the past. The State is daily undertaking not merely more duties, but essentially moral duties. It drives noblemen and gentlemen in shoals to Monte Carlo, because no decent government will allow public gaming-tables at home. It is daily more and more energetically instructing parents in their duty towards their own offspring, and constituting itself the universal parent to children of no parents, or of worse than none. The regulation of factories, the control of the liquor traffic, the housing of the poor, education in all its branches—these are admitted by both political parties (however much they may differ about details) to be legitimate departments of State activity. And that admission is one which it is a hopeless task to reconcile with the old theory that the State is merely a policeman whose sole function is to prevent people putting their hands into other people's pockets. Public men may still make speeches which assume that education is nothing but an instrument of

[1] See his Romanes Lecture on *Evolution and Ethics.*

commercial competition with Germany. But these survivals do not represent the real trend of the national conscience. Whatever we may think of some of the details of Mr. Rhodes' will, it is at least a significant fact that, in the view of that great financier, the training and discipline of character are more important objects of education than either the mere acquisition of knowledge or the mere acquisition of technical skill. Touches of the boyish materialism, which in his vigorous mind mingled so oddly with a dominating idealism, we may certainly trace in that remarkable document. For teachers and students alike, he seems to have thought that high thinking was best promoted by high living. And it is doubtful whether the marks to be assigned (under his scheme) to character would, in some modern schools, mean anything but additional marks for athletics. But still the will is mainly notable for the idealist view which it takes, not only of education, but also of the State. That the true life of a nation—nay, if we must express things commercially, its most valuable asset—is its ideal of life, its type of character, and not its commercial treaties, its paper constitutions, or its technical efficiency (important as all these are),—*that* at least Mr. Rhodes may be credited with having discerned with unerring eye. And surely on reflection few even of the fanatics of secular education will deny that there can be no education worthy of the name which does not aim at moral objects. Whether character can best be trained with or without the

aid of religion, is a question about which surely there should not be two opinions among Christian people. How the great claims of Christianity can best be reconciled with the little claims of competing Churches and sects is a mere question of detail, which should be discussed in a spirit of charity and conciliation. For such a discussion, this is not the time or place. I content myself with enunciating the principle: Christian education is a primary interest, not merely of the Church, but of the Christian State. By the admission that the education of mind and character is the most important of legislative aims, we have really begun the return to that Christian Aristotelian view of the State which should be a characteristic note of the coming century. In the religious pageantry of the coming Coronation we may see an impressive symbol of the ideal which I have tried to suggest. If we let it remind us that not merely a passive obedience, but an enthusiastic loyalty to the State, and a zealous fulfilment of all civic and political obligations, are religious duties, the approaching ceremony may be to us something more than an obsolete formality. To combine something of the old civic patriotism of Greece with the wider, the deeper, the more personal enthusiasm of humanity, which is the characteristic note of the Christian ideal, should be the aim of those who would see a meaning in the solemn religious anointing of the head of the State, by the chief representative of the Christian priesthood, in the most venerable sanctuary of the English nation.

XXII.

CHURCH AND STATE.

"And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon; and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard."—1 KINGS i. 45.

XXII.

CHURCH AND STATE.

ON the Sunday before last I took the impending Coronation as a text for some remarks upon the spiritual aspect of the State. I tried to suggest that instead of looking upon it as a mere society for the protection of person and property, we should go back to the old Greek idea of the State as a society for the promotion of virtue—of the highest well-being of which human nature is capable. Our view of the sacred, the spiritual, the divine character of the State ought to be all the stronger, not the weaker, because the teaching of Christ has given us an ideal of humanity higher, deeper, more spiritual than was possible to men like Aristotle or even Plato.

But some may think, "If we take this view of the State, if the State aims at spiritual objects, what room is left for the Church? Can it be at best anything more than a department of the State? Are we not driven to that view of the relations between Church and State which is commonly called Erastian?"

I do not think so. It is quite true that the State aims ultimately and ideally at producing the total well-being of human society, including goodness; but

it does not follow that the State is the most efficient of all possible societies for that purpose. There are two characteristics which differentiate the State from all other societies. It is essentially compulsive, and it must include all the inhabitants of a territory over which its sway extends. And yet for the promotion of religion and morality more limited societies, depending on voluntary consent, upon personal conviction, upon spontaneous enthusiasm, may be more efficient than the State, with its compulsion, its penalties, its universality. That is just the new departure which was made by the Church of Christ in its original form. In the old world, religion was always a matter of State. The earliest Churches (if Churches they should be called) were nation-Churches. A man's religion was an accident of birth, not a voluntary choice of his own. Judaism became, we may say, a true Church just at the moment when it ceased to be a nation; and this prepared the way for the Church of Christ, which from the very first was essentially voluntary, non-national, universal. The Church was from the very first composed of the disciples of Christ. There is no such thing as a compulsory disciple. And history shows us surely that this voluntary society of disciples has proved an infinitely more effectual society for the promotion of virtue than all the religions of the old world, and the State discipline of which these religions were an essential part. And the Church can never lose this character—the character of a voluntary society, a society of believers in a Person and followers

of a Person—without forfeiting its most essential character.

The true difference between Church and State is not a difference of ends, but a difference of means. It is the duty of the State to promote goodness just as much as it is the duty of the Church,—to the very limited extent to which goodness can be directly promoted by force, by material conditions, or by such spiritual forces as can be brought to bear upon unwilling subjects,—though, after all, the ideal of the State is not to rule over the unwilling, but to embody and express the highest aims and aspirations, the truest self, of its individual citizens; but that is an ideal which cannot always be realised. The Church addresses itself essentially to willing subjects. Its appeal is to conscience, to conviction, to enthusiasm. Absolute fusion of Church and State is therefore inconsistent with the true functions of each. But it does not follow that no connection between Church and State is possible or desirable. On the contrary, if the State has really the high functions which we have attributed to it, such a view must eventually, one would think, materially modify the attitude of thoughtful men towards the institution which is known as an Established Church.

If the eighteenth century protection of person and property view of the State be a right one, then an established Church is at best the mere tolerable anomaly that it still is to many who provisionally defend it. If Church and State are both of them

societies for the promotion of virtue, their alliance and their co-operation ought to be regarded as natural, normal, conformable to the highest ideal of each. I do not for one moment suggest that the particular type of relation between Church and State which obtains in this country is the only one which is consistent with a high ethical conception of the State. The Government of the United States is not godless because its circumstances and history have led it to treat all Christian denominations in the same way, and forbidden it to enter into any official relations with them except as property-holding bodies. Nor is the French Government *necessarily* indifferent to religious truth because it pays, and to some extent controls, the ministers of Roman Catholicism, of Protestantism, and of Judaism.

When once we have realised that the true end of government is simply to produce the greatest good, spiritual and material, moral and hedonistic, that is attainable at a particular time and place, all these questions as to the relations between State and Church become merely questions of detail and of expediency. It is enough to claim for the English system that it is suitable to the conditions and circumstances of the English nation at the present time.

I should not care to speak from the pulpit at all on this question of Church and State merely for the purpose of arguing against disestablishment. But, strongly as I hold that disestablishment at the present moment would be a great national disaster, there are

many features in the English Church which we cannot imagine surviving indefinitely. One may safely say that, without grave modifications, the present system of patronage, the present irresponsibility of the individual clergyman, the present unjust and capricious distribution of ecclesiastical endowments, cannot be conceived of as existing in the year 2000. Either Parliament must reform the Church, or it must allow the Church—by which I need hardly say I do not mean the clergy alone—to reform itself.

At all events, in one form or another, great changes are inevitable, though (it may be) the changes need not be greater than have actually been carried out in the century that is past by the action of Parliament.[1] And, therefore, it seems to me that it is of great importance that the true theory of Church and State should be well understood by Churchmen. I have tried to suggest that it is not beyond the province of the State to concern itself with the teaching of religion and the provision of religious worship, even with the provision of such things out of the taxes, though I need hardly stay to point out that in this country nothing of the kind is done.[2] Still less is

[1] Churchmen constantly forget how much the Church owes to the Cathedrals Act, the institution of the Ecclesiastical Commission, and the various Acts for enforcing the residence of the clergy. Some of this legislation was bitterly opposed by the clerical opinion of the time.

[2] I need hardly say that I should advocate the most complete toleration, not because the State has nothing to do with religion, but just because it has to do with religion; and toleration is conducive to the religious as well as to the moral, intellectual, and material good of the nation.

there any objection to that control by the State of the property belonging to ecclesiastical corporations, which is what Church Establishment in this country practically amounts to.

There is no objection to this sort of interference with spiritual matters on the part of the State. Is it inconsistent with a true conception of the Church? At first sight, let me frankly admit that some features of our present system would appear to be so. The Church, we have seen, is a voluntary society. A society may enter into close relations with another society, but it cannot, it would naturally seem, part with the right to regulate its own affairs and to appoint its own officers. Now, if we supposed Church and State to be composed of an entirely different set of persons, actuated by a totally different set of principles, the bare idea of interference with the internal discipline of the Church by the State would indeed be fatal to the very object of her existence. In the early days of the Christian Church, placed in the middle of a pagan society, the claim of Roman Emperors and Roman governors to regulate its internal affairs would obviously have been fatal to its very existence. For the Church was undoubtedly in a sense, as the Roman authorities correctly discerned it to be, a great conspiracy against the principles upon which pagan society was founded. But the case is quite otherwise when the bulk of the community is nominally Christian, when the two associations consist practically of the same persons under different

organisations. This state of things was approximately realised in the Middle Ages. When John Wycliffe maintained the right of the State to take away the property of idle monks and compel secular ecclesiastics to perform their duty more efficiently, he was guilty of no Erastianism in the sense in which the word is usually employed. The Church, he contended, consisted essentially of the laity. There was a moment, as he quaintly put it, the moment after the Resurrection, when the Church of Christ consisted of a single lay woman.[1] And if the unfaithfulness of the clergy reached a certain pitch, the laity might once again constitute the true Church of Christ. He was therefore only calling upon one member of the ecclesiastical body politic to reform another. The question whether the desired reform should be carried out by the Nation-Church assembled in Parliament, or by the Nation-Church as supposed to be represented in Convocation, was only a question of machinery. Substantially, he was only calling upon the Church to reform itself. And the same plea might no doubt be urged in favour of that assumption of ecclesiastical authority by the Sovereign which took place at the time of the Reformation, though no doubt many things were done in connection therewith which no modern thinker could well defend.

But all this, it may be thought, is ancient history. Whatever may have been the case once, the nation is now not all of one mind in religious questions.

[1] *De Civili Dominio*, I. cap. xliii. (ed. Poole, p. 392).

Among electors and among members of Parliament not all are even in the most nominal sense Christians at all. And the Christians are split into a dozen conflicting sects. How, under these circumstances, can we justify, from the point of view of the Church, that measure of interference with the affairs of an avowedly voluntary society which the existing system necessarily involves? I would answer by insisting once more on the principle that the justification of any law or institution whatever depends upon the end which it serves. The true question for the Church is not, "Does our submission to this measure of State interference constitute an infringement of an abstract *a priori* ideal of autonomy or self-government; does it correspond with the traditional principles and practices which have been handed down to us from primitive times?"; but rather, "Does it or does it not conduce to the end for which the Church exists?" "Will the Church do its work more or less efficiently, by submitting to these restrictions?"

And if that test be applied, the answer cannot, to my mind, be very doubtful. Of course there is some loss. Undoubtedly we are now prevented from making those alterations in our formularies which the changing ideas of the time seem to call for. But there is no reason why Parliament should not grant to a really representative clerical and lay convocation the power to make such detailed changes, without any fundamental alteration in the relations

between Church and State.[1] It is probable that the appointment of bishops by the Prime Minister really means designation by the public opinion of the lay community far more thoroughly than their designation by diocesan synods would do. The existence of a lay court of final appeal secures a progressive toleration of differences in practice and opinion which could hardly have been secured in any other way. The Church of England would inevitably, it is not too much to say, have committed suicide as a comprehensive national Church but for the interposition of that fatherly tribunal. It certainly did its best to do so not very long ago. Every party in the Church has had its distinctive opinions condemned by the strictly ecclesiastical Court, *i.e.* either by bishops in person or their lay ecclesiastical judges. In every case (putting aside the almost solitary case of a clergyman who has deliberately discarded the name of Christian [2]), the condemnation has been reversed by the Judicial Committee. Those who care about the comprehensiveness, the progressiveness, the effectiveness of the Church, will not be in a hurry to modify a state of things which has had these beneficent results; and if this were the place to do it, I could, I think, show by a

[1] *i.e.* subject to the negative control of Parliament. The Canons of a reformed Convocation should receive the assent of the Crown, unless either House petitioned against them.

[2] The case of Mr. Voysey. There is also the case of Mr. Heath, who was deprived in 1861 for opinions difficult to distinguish from those allowed in the case of the writers in *Essays and Reviews*, though they were more crudely expressed.

survey of the ecclesiastical legislation of the last century, how much Parliament has done to increase the internal efficiency of the Church during that period; and in so doing it has really been interpreting the better mind of the Church herself. If at any time the State should be governed in its attitude towards the Church by hostile, malevolent, and anti-Christian intentions, then, of course, a state of things would have arisen in which it would be necessary for Churchmen to repudiate State control, and, at any cost of property, of confiscated cathedrals, or of lost prestige, to insist on constituting themselves into a purely voluntary society. If the State were to insist on appointing as bishops men who failed to command public respect, to impose upon the clergy doctrines or practices opposed to their most cherished convictions, or to forbid the services and the usages which the mass of Churchmen approve, then, of course, the existing state of things would have to be revised. At present, I venture to leave with you this suggestion, that the present relations between Church and State are (though not the only possible expression of it) an impressive, emphatic, and practically serviceable expression of the idea that Church and State alike exist to promote a national well-being which is essentially moral and spiritual.

The spiritual character of the State, the national or civic character of the Church—that is what the existence of the established Church symbolises and promotes. That the reality should come nearer the

ideal, should be the prayer and the effort of every good Churchman and of every good citizen.

There is no time now to discuss details of ecclesiastical reform, and I will merely suggest that two things are imperatively needed if the present relations between Church and State are to continue for another century.

(1) The Church must be in one way or another allowed to reform its abuses and its inefficiencies, and to husband and redistribute its resources. Not until this is done will the laity be roused into setting about that re-endowment of the Church which is an absolutely essential condition of its continued efficiency.

And (2) the Church of England must adopt a different attitude towards the Protestant Nonconformist bodies. What is wanted, it seems to me, is not so much legal changes or corporate action on the part of the Church collectively, though the time may come for such action in the future, as the frank abandonment of all those narrow theories which prevent our recognising the Nonconformist Churches as branches of the true Church of Christ, and their ministers as true Christian presbyters. We shall still, if we are wise, regard external unity as the necessary ideal of the Church of Christ. We shall still seek to maintain the continuity of our Church with the historic Churches of the past, and jealously retain the episcopacy and the other institutions which tend to keep up that sense of continuity. We shall still claim to be, in a distinctive sense, the national

Church; but we shall hold that that position is strengthened, not weakened, by every practicable kind of intercourse, association, co-operation, intercommunion with the Nonconformist Churches.

On the Coronation Day the Church of England will stand forth conspicuously before all men as the representative of our national Christianity. That is her true position. She claims to be not the only branch, but the most ancient, the most comprehensive, the typical and representative branch of that Church of Christ which consists essentially of all Christ's followers in this land. Would not her position be all the stronger if a future coronation should see the representatives of the leading Nonconformist bodies assisting officially in the ceremony, and joining in communion with the Sovereign and the bishops? If such a ceremony were possible, if such an honorary and historic primacy among sister Churches should come to represent the habitual relation between the Church of England and the Churches in England, the Church of England would have become at one and the same time doubly national and doubly catholic.

XXIII.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—JOHN xv. 14.

XXIII.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES.

DID our Lord contemplate the existence of a Church? Is the Church a part of the original Christianity — the Christianity of Christ? In one sense undoubtedly it is. It is quite clear that our Lord did think of His disciples as forming during His lifetime a society of persons co-operating together for certain purposes. Not, observe, a mere aggregate of isolated individuals,—individuals cherishing certain ideas in their hearts, individuals who had attained a certain degree of spiritual perfection, and were destined to a certain spiritual future,—but a society knowing and recognising one another as brethren, known and recognised by all men as the disciples of their one Master. Discipleship of Christ undoubtedly implied a certain belief. You cannot become the disciple of anyone unless you believe at least some part of what he has taught, and believe that he has something more to teach that you have not yet learned. But even in the later part of our Lord's ministry we can hardly say that an explicit declaration of belief in His Messiahship was essential to bare membership of the Christian society. Belief in Christ was undoubtedly

required, but it was a very vague and undefined belief. A very uncertain and precarious basis for membership of a society, we may be inclined to exclaim, we who are familiar with later developments of the Church-idea. Yet that was Christ's idea. And though vague, it was a very practical conception. The best test of belief in Christ, as Christ Himself understood it and as Christ Himself demanded it, was obedience — doing the things that Christ commands. The kind of faith which ends in producing that, is the kind of faith that is essential to Christianity. That is the one test of being a Christian. Never may the Church at any later age of her history adopt any other test of membership in Christ's Church. Eternally and for ever the Church of Christ consists of the whole body of persons who recognise Christ as their Master, and who try to do the things which He commands them.

Now it follows from this conception of the Church, that the test of membership in the Church is, and ought to be, in a sense, a vague and not easily definable thing. Observe what I mean. There is nothing vague about the conception of the perfect Christian. The Christian ideal of life is a very clear and definite one. The Christian character is marked out for us in a very plain and definite manner. Unselfishness, unworldliness, justice, purity, honesty—these are plain and definite things enough. I do not mean to say that there are no doubts or difficulties as to what a Christian ought to do in such and such particular circum-

stances. But there is a quite definite ideal of what the Christian character is. We may not all have a perfect grasp of that ideal, but we have all of us a quite sufficient grasp of it to make it a very clear and definite rule of life. And the ideal of Christian belief is just the belief that is most calculated to produce the Christian character. The ideal of what a Christian should be is plain enough; but when we come to ask whether this or that man is a Christian at all, whether he has fallen so far behind the Christian ideal in belief and in conduct as to be no longer a Christian at all, that is a question to which no absolutely definite and precise answer can be given. It is clear that among the first disciples of Christ—those who followed Him about to listen to His teaching, and who subsequently organised themselves in the definite communities known as Christian Churches—there were disciples of very different kinds. There were degrees of intensity, degrees of enlightenment, degrees of insight in belief, degrees of faithfulness in practice. And so it must be now—all the more so in proportion as society in general has become nominally Christian.

We must never allow ourselves to go back upon that primary and elementary conception of Christianity. We must never refuse the name of Christian to anyone who is in his way a sincere disciple of Christ in belief, and is trying to do the things that He commanded. But unfortunately the people who most clearly grasp this side of the matter, often ignore a side of Christ's teaching which is no less important. They

have tended more or less to say that because Christianity in its widest sense must be thus catholic and comprehensive, therefore all outward manifestation of corporate life, all forms of worship, all external ordinances, all kinds of organisation and ecclesiastical office, must be, if not absolutely superfluous and pernicious, at least matters which may be wholly abandoned to the fancy and caprice of each isolated individual. Now, to argue thus destroys the whole ideal of a society, or at least the whole efficacy of the society to do the work which it was sent into the world to do. A society is no longer a society which has no definite meetings, rules, organisations, corporate life and corporate activity. But there cannot be corporate life and corporate activity unless individuals are willing to submit their individual judgment to that of their fellows, and to agree to many restrictions upon their individual liberty. Is it not obvious that if the Christian society had not devised definite forms of worship, definite standards of doctrine, definite rules of discipline and conduct, definite ways of applying and enforcing the general commands of its Master and Founder, Christianity would have dwindled away into at best a school of thought which would have passed away, as the school of Hillel or the school of Zeno has passed away? It would have added something to the general stock of ideas, and then have been superseded. And emphatically must we assert that that was not what Christianity was intended to be—that is what it cannot become without ceasing to be

Christianity at all. The idea of a society of brethren acting and working together for the great moral and spiritual and social ends which Jesus called the Kingdom of Heaven, that is absolutely vital and essential to Christianity!

Here, then, are two complementary truths which we have somehow got to combine. On the one hand, no disciple of Christ can be placed outside the Christian Church: on the other, all membership of the Christian Church must involve much besides the individual effort to grasp and act out for oneself the ideas of Christ. No doubt the ideal would be that there should be universal agreement in the development of corporate life; that Christians should one and all agree to the same forms and expressions of corporate activity, accept and obey the same authorities; not merely aim at the same ends, but agree as to the best possible means of attaining them. That is the ideal, and for a time the actual state of things was not wholly remote from that ideal. For, though the scattered individual Christian communities early exhibited wide varieties of ritual usage, of doctrinal tendency, and even of practical ideal, it was long before one group of Christians actually pronounced another not to be Christian on account of such differences. And the earliest heresies, it may be fairly admitted, were mostly of that wild, half-pagan, half-Jewish type, which reasonably suggested a doubt whether anything was left among them of the Christianity of Christ. The struggle against Gnosticism really was, broadly speak-

ing, a struggle of Christianity against something that was not Christianity. It is quite true that at first Gnosticism was not as sharply marked off from the Church and its authority as was afterwards the case. There was a Gnosticism in the Church as well as a Gnosticism outside it. What I have said refers to the fully-developed Gnostic sects. Within the Church there was for a time much toleration of minor differences. But human nature being what it is, it was not to be expected that this agreement could be universal and permanent. That differences of usage should prevail in geographically separate Christian communities may be admitted to be inevitable, but this is not necessarily inconsistent with mutual recognition. It is more difficult to secure this recognition where the Christians in the same place cannot agree to worship in the same forms, to adopt the same ecclesiastical polity and policy in all the innumerable practical details which nevertheless must be settled one way or another if there is to be such a thing as corporate life. At all events, we have to face the fact that at the present day Christian people are split up into a number of distinct societies; and the question which I want to discuss this morning is the nature of our duty, as a Church and as individuals, towards the conflicting sects of our own country,—a question some treatment of which forms the necessary complement to what I said last Sunday in defence of our position as a national Church.

Now the first thing I would contend for is the full and frank recognition of both sides of the truth. On

the one hand, the true Church, *the* Church, is the whole body of Christ's disciples. But the idea of a Church also demands a closer union, a compacter organisation, a stricter discipline, than can be realised in so vague an association as that. It is only in more definite Christian societies that the idea of Christian brotherhood can be realised in its fullest intensity and bear its richest fruit,—that fruit which Christ recognised as a test of true Churchmanship, the fruit of good works—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is in a closer union with the smaller body that the individual realises his union with and membership of the larger body. We must not interpret the narrow Churchmanship in such a way as to be inconsistent with the wider. But, on the other hand, let us remember, we must not so abuse the wider idea of Churchmanship as to be inconsistent with the narrower, indeed, but closer, more practical, more intimate tie which binds us to the particular circle of Christians with whom we habitually worship and co-operate. It is a mistake to suppose that we show true liberality, true Christian catholicity, by simply sitting loose to the traditions, the forms, the discipline of our own particular society. Just as true patriotism is perfectly consistent with the recognition of the wider society of the human race, so the individual will best show his appreciation of the wider Churchmanship by loyally and heartily making the very most of his position as a member of the smaller society. The

Church will be represented to him by his particular branch of the Church, while he will never forget that outside his own body there remain bodies which are also Churches, and branches of the one true, highest Church.

Are we then, it may be asked, simply to acquiesce in the present divided state of Christendom, and in particular to acquiesce in that extreme exaggeration of disunion which prevails in our own country? Are we to abandon all struggle and effort after unity, and acquiesce (for all practical purposes) in the ideal of free competition in religions as in commerce? I do not think so. That would be, as it seems to me, quite inconsistent with a due appreciation of the idea of the Church. The ideal is unity; and we must always be striving after the ideal. But let us realise that unity is a matter of degree. Observe just where the need of unity comes in. It is not merely permissible, it is absolutely necessary, that within the one society of Christ's disciples there should be many smaller, more or less autonomous, societies. That has always been so. The Church of each particular town or diocese was always recognised as an autonomous community, and there was closer union and similarity of usage among the different towns of the same province than in the different provinces or countries of the ancient world. No breach of unity was involved in the fact that the Churchmen of Carthage did not, as indeed they could not, worship with the Christians of Rome, or even in the fact that they worshipped under somewhat different

forms. The fact that we, at the present day, do not worship in the same building with our fellow-Christians even in the same country village, is no doubt in its way a violation of unity; but that is not the most serious thing. The real breach of unity lies in the want of mutual recognition, co-operation, I may add mutual subordination, between these conflicting and competing groups of Christians. Nobody can doubt that the effect of these divisions does not stop at the mere waste of energy, the keeping up of two places of worship and two pastors where one could suffice, with loss of what each group might gain from close contact with the others. It does tend to weaken —it is impossible to say how much—the total strength which the wider Church can put forth in its battles against sin and world and flesh. The miserable education difficulty is an excellent illustration of its effects. One set of Christian clergy regard as almost worthless a religious education which fails to teach children doctrines which nine-tenths of their own laity do not believe; and another large body of Christians would prefer no religious education at all to an education which gave a shadow of a shade of ascendency to one Church over another in the competition of interests. It is the want of mutual co-operation—the want of co-operation, not the mere unessential differences of formula and the original differences of doctrine which are now so much a matter of history and of tradition—that is the evil to be attacked. What, then, is the duty of Churchmen towards these divisions?

1. In the first place, I would urge that we should endeavour to get rid of, and to disclaim on every possible occasion, the theory of apostolical succession as a matter of absolute necessity, and all the exclusive ideas about our particular Church which go with it. The greatest harm is done, not by the actual divisions themselves, but by the theories which treat them as matters of vital importance. If once the impression disappears that to the Church of England all Nonconformist bodies are simply unauthorised, wickedly schismatical sects, half the evil—the uncharitableness, and the bitterness, and the waste of energy—will be gone. Cordially to recognise the Nonconformist bodies as Churches, is the first step towards not a lower, but a higher and stronger idea of *the* Church. To produce this change of feeling within the Church should be the main and most immediate effort of those who desire as their ultimate goal the visible reunion of Christendom.

2. We should multiply and increase in every practicable way co-operation between all Christian societies. I am not particularly anxious, indeed, that people should get into the habit of frequent attendance at the services of other bodies than their own. As a rule, I think the universal Churchmanship is best promoted by attaching oneself and adhering to one's own particular branch of the Church until we see good reason to change it. But it would materially help this co-operation among Christians if Nonconformists were now and then welcomed on occasions of common action

or conference to Holy Communion in Church of England churches. I trust even now that there are not many of the clergy who would actually repel from the Communion unconfirmed Nonconformists [1] (even if there is a legal right to do so); but what is wanted is not merely non-rejection, but cordial welcome. There is something quite pathetic in the way in which Canon Henson's recent proposal to this effect has been welcomed in private, if not in public, utterances by Nonconformist ministers.

3. Are we to be content with these things, or are we to push on towards further measures of reunion? It would be quite unreasonable to expect that any practicable change in the formularies of the Church of England should lead to the sudden and widely-spread influx into the Church of Nonconformist clergy or laity. They are divided from us—let us remember—not so much by any peculiar dogmatic tenet or formulary, either of theirs or of ours, as by differences of tradition, association, religious habit, devotional tone. It is not, as a rule, any enthusiastic love of the Thirty-nine Articles that makes us Churchmen. It is not merely or primarily an attachment to John Wesley's doctrines of the Atonement and Justification that attaches the modern Methodist to Methodism. The modern Baptist is not primarily an objector to infant baptism. Still, I do think we are right in insist-

[1] The admission of Nonconformists to Holy Communion, without insisting upon Confirmation, has recently received the sanction of the present Archbishop of York.

ing that closer union than a mere mutual tolerance is the ultimate goal to which we should look forward. We can form very vague and general conceptions of the direction which such movements may hereafter take. They might result in wholesale formal unions between Churches which have discovered that nothing essential separates them. The recent amalgamation between the Free Kirk of Scotland and the United Presbyterians, and many similar fusions that have taken place in this country and America, show that such schemes are not chimerical. The further unity might take the form of the gradual growth of some one body at the expense of others, because that body had purified itself from all the narrowness and exclusiveness, the superstitions and inefficiencies, which had kept people out of it. It might take the form of an incorporation in a more world-embracing Church of smaller societies, which should yet retain some organisation and independence of their own. It might take the form of a federation and union of Protestant bodies which agree in the essentials of Christian truth. Of still wider schemes of reunion I will say nothing. There may come a time when we may get beyond the limits of Protestantism in our schemes of reunion, but that can only be when the Churches of the Continent shall have ceased to be, in the present sense of the term, Roman. We should keep our minds open to all the possibilities of the future. We should do everything in our power to correct in our own Church all the things that hinder any measure or

kind of "godly union and concord." We should bear in mind that there are many kinds and degrees, many modes and manifestations of unity. We should welcome every sort and measure of unity, and feel that whatever tends towards such unity tends to realise the ideal of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church.

And now let me return briefly to my immediate subject—the question of the present relations between the Church of England and other English Churches. Is there anything in the present legal position of the Church of England which tends to keep up dissension? I distinctly believe there is not. Among all the reasons which make one desirous of maintaining the present relations between the Church of England and the State, the most powerful is the fact that it tends towards comprehensiveness, toleration, catholicity within the Church. And the best way towards more unity between the Church of England and outside bodies is to keep up the unity amid variety within each of the Churches. Further union of the Churches can only come, I believe, through the further liberalising of the theology of all. When theological narrowness and intolerance disappear, there is some hope that social and political intolerance may disappear also.

The position of the Church of England involves no real unfairness to other bodies. No Nonconformist is taxed for the support of the Church. The Church did, no doubt, originally receive its property from the nation in a sense which is not true of any other body;

and in consideration of the fact it is fair and reasonable that the State should interfere with and control the disposition of that property to a greater extent than it claims to do with the property of other Churches. Every legal privilege that the Church enjoys is purchased by a corresponding disability. Its position is exceptional, but it involves no injustice. The true idea, as I take it, of the Established Church in present circumstances, is that it is not the only, not the exclusive, but the typical or representative Christian community—not the only, but the most direct and historical embodiment of the national Christianity. The more the Church in the future shall enter into alliance and co-operation with the smaller voluntary societies to which in the course of its history it has given birth, the more it will make good its title to be, I will not say *the* National Church, but more national than any other. The existence of one such body, more directly controlled by the nation through Parliament, ought to be an aid and assistance, and not a hindrance, to the growth of that wider and more inclusive view of the Church for which in these sermons I have contended.

XXIV.

THE BROAD CHURCH PARTY.

"For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men? For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men?—1 Cor. iii. 3, 4 (R.V.).

"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. iii. 11 (R.V.).

XXIV.

THE BROAD CHURCH PARTY.[1]

IT may seem strange, and even inconsistent, that a body of men, who profess a special devotion to the comprehensiveness of the Church of England, should be seeking to add a new society to those which already proclaim to the world the divided state of the English Church. At first sight, St. Paul's indignant remonstrance with the Corinthian Christians may seem to rebuke us; and if less than others we attach ourselves to any single leader, or any particular set of dogmatic opinions, a critic might be disposed to place us in the position of those in the Church of Corinth who apparently made a boast of their emancipation from apostolic leadership, who aimed at the formation of a Christ party intermediate between the conflicting factions, who tended to make a sect of unsectarianism, a party of anti-party, a dogma of anti-dogmatism.

And yet, on further consideration, I think that we may find in the Apostle's exhortations to the Corinthians, full as they are of solemn warning for us, some

[1] Preached in St. Peter's Church, Bayswater, London, W., on Friday, 6th October 1899, before the members of the Churchmen's Union for the advancement of Liberal Religious Thought, at their first annual meeting.

encouragement and sanction for what we are trying to do. He warns us, indeed, of the necessity of building upon the one foundation—the historical revelation of God in Christ,—and of the danger of putting zeal for intellectual school or ecclesiastical party in the place of simple devotion to Jesus Christ, and to the ideal of life which He represents. And yet he recognises fully and frankly that there must be differences of opinion, and that these are not inconsistent with essential unity. It is the tendency to make differences of thought or of expression into grounds of practical separation, rather than those differences themselves, that is rebuked.

He recognises that the watering of Apollos was not altogether the same thing as the planting of Paul. There were intellectual differences between them,—varieties of spiritual tone, of intellectual presentation, of comparative emphasis,—which did not, however, make the gospel of Apollos a different thing from the gospel of Paul. The foundation was the same; the superstructure was different. Among the Corinthians themselves these differences of superstructure had gone far beyond any original difference between the teaching of the two leaders themselves. And the developments given by the Corinthian parties to the original deposit of truth were of very unequal value. Of the building that had taken place upon the one foundation, some part was gold, some silver, some costly stones, some wood, some hay, some stubble. This building of superstructures was full of peril, but

it is recognised as inevitable; even the least valuable of this over-building was compatible with Christianity, with the personal salvation of the individual; time alone could show the real value of these varied contributions to the adornment of the living temple, the spiritual house, the Church of God.

Let us try to apply the spirit of this teaching to our own circumstances. All of us who profess to be members of the Church of Christ and of the same branch of that Church, must take our stand upon the one foundation. In modern language, I think we may say that we adhere to the three great essentials of the Christian religion—belief in a personal God, in a personal immortality, and (while not limiting the idea of revelation to the Old and New Testaments) in a unique and paramount revelation of God in the historic Christ. But we recognise that to this one foundation there has, in the course of ages, been added much building-upon. Of the vast superstructure of doctrinal and ritual and ethical tradition which has been built up upon and around the essential Christianity which we find in the moral and religious consciousness of Jesus the Son of God, not all is of equal value. There is a great deal of hay and stubble which has simply got to be cleared away. There is much wood that has served a useful purpose in its day, but which must inevitably be replaced as time goes on. There are parts of the traditional theology which must be rebuilt; and that which still retains its value must not be treated as if it were all

of equal utility or equal intrinsic importance; we must learn to appreciate it for what it is, and not for what it is not—the gold for gold, and the silver for silver. We must treat it as the speculation or reflection of bygone ages about Christ and His work, reflection from which we have still much to learn, but which must not be mistaken for the foundation itself, and must not (to drop the metaphor) be allowed to stop the progress of that living thought by which alone can the real meaning of Christianity be brought home to successive ages, by which alone can we continue the never-finished process of building up that fabric of knowledge in which every truth has its place, and in its place is recognised as part of the continuous self-revelation of God to the world.

And be it remembered, this process of demolition, reconstruction, readjustment, is no new thing. It is only ignorance which supposes that the traditional theology of the generation before us is all of one piece, all equally ancient, all of equal authority, of equal value. And it is only by a very sophistical and eclectic writing of history that the growth of Christian doctrine can be represented as merely a continuous development, in which there is expansion, addition, evolution, but no contradiction, no surrender of what was once asserted, no assertion of what was once denied. We talk about our own age as a period of transition; but in the history of thought every period is a period of transition, except the periods of

stagnation. The periods that we now look upon as the flourishing ages of traditional theology—the age of Constantine, the golden age of scholasticism, or the period of the Reformation—were really the moments of greatest change. The moment that theology ceases to move, it loses its hold on the life of the age. If we want to see what happens when theology ceases to move, or moves only by the addition of new fancies excogitated in conscious and deliberate defiance of all the intellectual tendencies of the age, we have only to look abroad. There we see some approximation to a changeless theology; but what place has that theology in the real working beliefs of the average Frenchman, educated or uneducated, even when there survives a reverent sympathy with the Church, by no means destitute of moral value? A theology which really expresses the mind of an age is always giving up old beliefs and adapting itself to new ones. And yet through all these changes we can trace the working of one and the self-same Spirit. Amid all the variations which Bossuet noticed in the Reformed Churches, and which he did not notice in his own, there has never disappeared the distinctive note of Christianity. We have no interest in disguising the Christian elements in non-Christian teaching; but, after all, I doubt whether there is a page of Marcus Aurelius or of the purest Buddhism which anybody would be in the least likely to mistake for a Christian utterance, for the Christianity which we unfailingly detect alike in the dogmatic fourth-century Father, the medieval mystic,

and the common-sense Christian moralist of the eighteenth century.

"Well, then," say our conservative friends, "how long is this process going on? If Christianity is always to be giving something up, will there not soon be nothing left? Why can't you tell us at once exactly where you are going to stop? Surely there must be this or that neat, compact, rounded body of well-defined doctrine, on which the Church must always take her stand? Why don't you tell us where to find it, and then we shall understand each other?" No; there is the fallacy! That is just what we cannot do! Not because we expect that the formula of Nicæa will ever lose its value (though the definitions in which it has been embodied may not always be the most natural or adequate expression of what it means for modern men), not because there are not many doctrinal statements which appear to us as little likely to require modification as Newton's law of gravitation, but because we recognise that already, for those who most insist upon the value of creeds, there are many things in them which don't mean to them exactly what they meant to former ages. Nor has the real vital spark of Christianity ever shone its brightest in the most venerable, the most necessary of formulæ, for formulæ hardly so much as attempt to express the character of Christ. Change, expansion, development, we must expect; and development may involve the transformation, or even the surrender, of some things which many of us now hold precious. But to ask us to

specify in advance exactly what the changes shall be, would be to ask us to anticipate the progress of thought; it would be to ask us to put some speculation of our own or of our spiritual forefathers in the place of the historical foundation which we are ever learning to interpret more thoroughly; it would be to prove unfaithful to that article in our creed in which (next to the belief in God) we see least reason to anticipate any possible ground for surrender or variation—the belief in a Holy Spirit still active in human society. Enough for us if we can catch what that Spirit is saying in audible trumpet-tones to the Church of our own day. We cannot presume to anticipate or to set limits to His revelations to the Churches of the future. Formulæ are precious, formulæ are necessary; but they are not all pure gold. And all, even what is of gold, belongs to the superstructure: the foundation is Christ.

And yet, it may be asked, "Granted that Christians must think, that thought must be progressive, and that thought progresses only through differences, why emphasise these differences by societies? Can it be said that the progress of thought, or the healthy development of Christian doctrine, will be much helped by societies which, however great the catholicity of their professions, are likely to become, or to be looked upon as, party organisations?" The doubt is a reasonable one; let me try to meet it fairly.

I am addressing those who have for the most part, I suppose, made up their minds on the subject. But

we need to encourage one another in our undertaking, and the encouragement may take the form of an apology.

1. Firstly, then, I believe that at the present moment there is real need for an emphatic assertion of the comprehensiveness of the English Church. In other circumstances, comprehensiveness might seem best asserted by the absence of party societies, but at the present day we know that practically large bodies of opinion can only assert themselves by means of association. There is a real need that those who believe in the comprehensiveness of the Church should bind themselves together, if it were only for the purpose of mutual protection. There is a double danger to be faced. The dominance of one party among the clergy of the Church of England is such as to threaten the existence of all other schools of thought; and, on the other hand, among the laity there is a danger lest resentment at that dominance should assume the form of a coercion which could only end in extinguishing needful liberty of thought and of action in the clergy and in congregations. We stand, then (if I am right in interpreting the mind of our society), for liberty, within those limits of discipline and obedience to constituted authority without which no organised community can live; and it will be our mission to unite with others in opposing any party in the Church or outside it, by which from time to time liberty may be threatened.

But in speaking of comprehensiveness, we must

beware of making mere variety of opinion an end in itself. Liberty is only valuable because without it thought is impossible. The end is not liberty, but truth. Amid all the controversies by which we are surrounded, the most distressing feature is the appalling indifference to truth which (I regret to say it) seems to be more and more prevalent among large sections of the clergy and their more zealous lay adherents. Far more alarming than the strange ceremonies which cause so much excitement in some quarters, far more obfuscating than clouds of incense, far more dangerous than any particular dogma or tenet, however reactionary, which is gaining ground among us, is the prevalence of a spirit which condemns inquiry, which closes its ears to the results of sober thinking and historical investigation, which makes the most tremendous assertions, pronounces the most comprehensive anathemas, erects the most exclusive barriers against fellow-Christians, upon the basis of the most flimsy and unexamined assumptions; which makes it a point of professional honour to be too busy to read (that is, to read anything except the party newspaper); which is ever ready to denounce as disloyal to his Church and to his cloth anyone whom study or reflection may have compelled to question some article of the fashionable shibboleth. I make no accusation, of course, against any one party in the Church as a whole; immense reservations would be necessary in applying such remarks even to sections. I only say, "This spirit is not unknown

among us; and this is the spirit we are afraid of: there is need that we should unite ourselves together to oppose this spirit." Many societies exist, as it seems to us, which practically tend to foster this spirit of Obscurantism; is it too much that there should be one to oppose it?

2. But, it may be asked, how are we likely to oppose it more successfully by belonging to the Churchmen's Union?

Secondly, then, I maintain that we do want to reveal the existence of a body of Churchmen who are opposed to this spirit. If I seemed a moment ago to take a despairing view of ecclesiastical tendencies, I will now go on to make what may at first sight seem the contradictory assertion, that there was never a time when there was so much liberal thought to be found among the clergy. We are constantly being told that the Broad Church has disappeared.[1] Even of those who could fairly be described as Broad Churchmen or Liberals in the technical or party sense of the term, the number is, I believe, far greater than it has ever been at any previous period in the history of the Church of England; while most of the principles for which the Broad Churchmen of the last generation contended are now more or less accepted by the enlightened and educated sections of both the other Church parties. It is just because the work of those men was so thoroughly done that the distinctiveness of the Broad Church party no longer

[1] This was said more frequently in 1899 than now.

forces itself upon the attention of superficial observers. To enlarge the conception of revelation beyond the limits of the Old and New Testaments, to deny mechanical theories of inspiration, to question Old Testament miracles, to accept the results of the most advanced criticism (at least as regards the Old Testament), to disown an arbitrary and forensic theory of the Atonement, to profess that "wider hope" for which Maurice suffered so much—these are opinions which no longer stamp a man as a Broad Churchman.

But if the work has been done, why seek to found a society to carry it on? For one thing, the theological progress which has been made has been largely neutralised in some quarters by its association with a narrow, if attenuated, sacerdotalism. And the general public has heard much more of these retrogressions than of the theological progress which has really gone on in the minds of many even among extreme High Churchmen. And again, where the results of thought and criticism are formally accepted, they are rarely allowed to modify the ordinary current of theological teaching. The majority of those who have accepted the newer way of looking at the Bible keep it far too much to themselves. And therefore I do believe it is well that the existence of those who are prepared, not necessarily to accept this or that particular set of conclusions which for the moment may be put forward by particular scholars, but to proclaim that they do want to appropriate the best

results of modern theological study, and to bring their teaching into harmony with it—I do believe that it is well that the existence of such a body of Churchmen should be proclaimed by an outward and visible organisation, proclaimed to the outside world, and (what is far more important) proclaimed to one another. And that brings me to what is, I believe, the strongest reason for the existence of this society. The number of clergy holding more or less decidedly liberal opinions, or (let me say, that I may not claim for any one section of the Church a monopoly of liberality) who hold liberal opinions, and who cannot really identify themselves with either of the traditional parties, though they may have more or less sympathy with one or the other of them, is really far larger than is commonly supposed—a minority, of course, but a very considerable minority, even in point of mere numbers. But we are isolated, terribly isolated, and many of us, I fear, are timid. Each of us imagines himself to be alone, or almost alone. And from the great men in high places who really agree with us we get little help. The young man who, at the university, has really had his eyes opened to great intellectual problems, takes holy orders very often with a sincere desire to face difficulties instead of evading them; to study, to think, to seek for truth, and to teach honestly—so far as due consideration for the somewhat spoiled weaker brother will permit—up to the level of his own thinking. He goes to his parish in this frame of mind; but does he there find, as a

rule, much encouragement to live up to these excellent intentions? Is he not only too likely to find himself surrounded by an atmosphere in which professional zeal and professional efficiency are apt to be identified with adherence to a certain set of party dogmas or party practices? The man who questions them, who declines to un-church Dissenters, who will not profess a holy horror at least of such abominations as evening Communion, finds himself labelled "a bad Churchman." Nobody likes to be called a bad anything. The temptation to such a man is strong to say as little as possible about points of difference, to make the most of his points of agreement with the prevailing tendency—not from any sordid or calculating desire of advancement, but simply from the natural craving for sympathy and religious fellowship with his brethren—to be colourless in his sermons, and neutral or silent at the clerical meeting, to identify himself as much as possible with his theological environment, to listen to those who tell him that higher criticism and that sort of thing are of no use in parish work, and that the Church—which means in practice the half-crown manual of so-called Church teaching—has settled once for all everything that it is necessary to know, and who insinuate that any doubts, or difficulties, or scruples he may feel are probably due to intellectual pride or personal conceit. And yet, in the next parish but one, it is likely enough, did he but know it, there is another man going through exactly the same experience, and crav-

ing for sympathy. It is the professional spirit in the Church that is the great enemy of thought and progress—let me say boldly, the great enemy of truth; and of what the professional spirit can do we have had a terrible example of late in the case of another profession and a neighbouring country![1] When once professional loyalty is identified with tenacious adherence to a dominant opinion, evidence makes no impression. I believe that it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the extent to which we might be strengthened in resistance to this characteristic failing in a profession of which we are as proud as the narrowest of Sacerdotalists, if those who occupy a more or less liberal or central position in theological and ecclesiastical matters could, through the medium of such a society as this, know each other a little better, confer with one another, encourage one another, and realise their unity with a large body of clerical opinion in other parts of the country, and with a body of laymen as earnest in their devotion to their Church as the lay adherents of the two highly organised and militant extremes of theological opinion.

3. And there is a third reason for such an organisation. Frankly and avowedly our society does aim at emancipating the Church from a yoke which is becoming intolerable; but we need not adopt, we are under no temptation to adopt, an aggressive attitude towards either of the recognised parties. We want rather to carry on the work which they have begun—

[1] The allusion is, of course, to the Dreyfus case.

to build upon the foundation which they have laid; and there is no reason why men who are not prepared to renounce all allegiance to one or other of these parties, but who feel the need for progress, should not join us. We are at one with the Evangelicals in regarding the person and teaching of our Lord as the basis of all Christian thought and practice: only we want to free this Evangelical principle from its association with narrow theories about Christ's work, and a highly technical psychology of religious emotion. We are at one with them in placing the Bible at the head of our religious authorities; only we must insist that the Bible to which we appeal shall be the Bible studied and understood; the Bible in the light of criticism, of science, of history; the Bible placed in its true relation to the history of other religions; the Bible studied as a whole, with due sense of proportion, of the proper relation of its parts to one another, and particularly with a due sense of the subordination of the Old Testament to the New. And I trust we are at one with the Evangelical party in the conviction that the essential thing in our religion is personal devotion to a living God, a personal Saviour, and a distinctively Christian ideal of life.

It is now generally recognised that the Oxford movement was a continuation and development of the great religious revival which preceded it. In a sense it was a reaction—a reactionary harking back to the fourth century, to the seventeenth century, even to the dark ages. But, like all really great

reactions, it had in it the seeds of progress. Its intellectual horizon was wider than that of the party out of which it sprang. Christianity was no longer looked upon as a closed circle of rigid and inelastic dogmas, proclaimed by the Apostles, and almost immediately obscured or buried till the sixteenth century. The appeal to the Church in place of the Bible was a step in advance, since the Church—the "Spirit-bearing body," as the early Fathers expressed it—was a living and progressive society. The appeal to the Church carried with it a recognition of the principle of growth, of development, of a perpetual inspiration, not limited to the first century or the fourth. The mission of liberal Christian thought at the present moment seems to me to be simply to carry on the work of the High Church party, and to emancipate the truth to which its teaching owes its great spiritual triumphs from the too narrow intellectual envelope by which its growth has been fettered.

Believe me, we shall never fight successfully against a narrow sacerdotalism by belittling the idea of the Church. It is its splendid grasp upon the magnificent idea of the world-wide religious community, upon the social side of Christianity, that has given the High Church party such a hold upon the religious mind of our age. What is wanted is to show that it is possible to have a strong idea of the claims, the mission, the destiny of the Christian society, without mistaking the clergy for the Church, and without making the mechanical fact or fiction of the apostolic succession

into the touchstone of catholicity; that it is possible to respect historical continuity, and to strive after unity, without erecting arbitrary barriers against Christian bodies with whom we are really much in sympathy, or attempting to construct delusive bridges between ourselves and bodies from whom we differ in all but the very essentials of Christian truth. It must be our mission, not to minimise, but to emphasise, the claims and prerogatives of the Christian society—to emphasise them so much that it shall become evident that the ideal of the Christian Church is something too high and too magnificent to allow of any actual visible society claiming to be more than an inadequate and approximate realisation of a great and inspiring ideal. Even in dealing with the extravagant claims of the priesthood, we shall do well, I venture to think, to emphasise the splendour of the ideal, and to show that these claims become all the more commanding when the clergy are treated as the representatives, the officers, the organs of a self-governing society, instead of being reduced to the level of a caste mechanically endowed with magical powers. Here, too, we must apply the same principle, and proclaim that priesthood is an ideal; that only so far as we can really show ourselves to be the organs of a Spirit-bearing body can we claim the authority, the influence, the leadership which ought to belong to the presbyters of a Christian society. And so with regard to sacramental teaching. It is not, I venture to think, our task to depreciate the sacramental prin-

ciple, but to show that a high practical appreciation of the sacraments, of the reverent, and even of the ceremonious administration of them, has nothing whatever to do with beliefs which, in their extreme form, ought boldly to be described as degrading superstitions, and in their attenuated forms come to so little that they elude all intellectual grasp. The more we can enter into and appreciate the devotional life, the practical activities, the spirit of corporate Christianity that the Oxford movement brought with it into the Church of England, the more success we shall have in the work of freeing its teaching from the too narrow intellectual moulds in which it was cast by the Oxford leaders.

The work has already been begun by men who rank as the leaders of the High Church party itself. It is by them very largely that liberty of thought about Biblical questions has been won for the clergy, and for the whole Church. And of late years, we find the old clerical pretensions greatly modified. Instead of the declaration that the Holy Spirit was never promised to laymen, we now find, in works like Canon Gore's [1] volume on Church Reform, strong pleas, supported by learned and candid examination of historical precedents, for the reassertion of the rights of the laity to sit in Church assemblies, and to vote even on matters of doctrine. We find admissions that, as a matter of simple history, the apostolical succession in three distinct orders is a fiction, though

[1] Now Bishop of Worcester.

the conclusions which naturally flow from such admissions may be evaded by ingenious expedients. And there have even been protests against a magical view of the sacraments, which not long ago would have caused distrust or scandal.

Those who call themselves liberal Churchmen may claim to be simply continuing the work of theological reform begun by the Oxford movement, and carried on by the more liberal section of its later disciples. Sooner or later there must come an end to the association of the liberal tendencies, so conspicuous in one section of the High Church party, with the attempts to revive medieval doctrines, to introduce Romanising practices, to create a tyranny, not merely of the Church over its members, but of the individual priest over the individual conscience. A few minds may long remain unconscious of the fundamental contradiction between the two spirits, but sooner or later the inevitable breach must come. Nothing but unwise persecution can delay it much longer. Very largely, I freely confess, my best hope for the growth of a liberal theology, of Church reform, and of a more social Christianity, lies in the gradual development of liberal tendencies among the High Church leaders, and the gradual diffusion of their influence through the rank and file. But this process may be greatly helped, if there is at the same time a growing body of clergy who without any attempt to construct a rival dogmatism of their own, will boldly avow that they are dissatisfied with the traditional formulæ of High

Church and Low Church alike; that Christianity is something greater and wider and deeper than party cries have made it; and that they will stand by one another in the attempt to free the real essential core of Christ's own teaching from the narrowing accretions of centuries, and to present it to the men of our age in a form in which it can be understood. Far be it from us to claim that it is only we, or only those in theological agreement with ourselves, inside or outside of the English Church, who are engaged in this great task. Far be it from us to represent that the intellectual task is anything but a very small contribution to the whole spiritual work of the Church — the battle against sin, the struggle for righteousness, the effort after a juster and nobler social order. Assertion of the right and duty of individual thought should go hand in hand with the growth of ever closer practical co-operation and sympathy between Churchmen of all schools. Loyalty to a wider society need not be diminished, it may be fostered, by the existence of smaller societies within its pale. The family is not the enemy of the State, nor is true patriotism inconsistent with true cosmopolitanism. May the increase of co-operation and sympathy between those who think and feel alike in such a society as this only increase and strengthen the bond which connects us with our brethren, in humble service of the same Lord and the same Church!

XXV.

LIBERALISM AND PRACTICAL PIETY.

"He that is not against us is for us."—MARK ix. 40 (R.V.).

"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth."—MATT. xii. 30 (R.V.).

XXV.[1]

LIBERALISM AND PRACTICAL PIETY.

WHEN we get two *primâ facie* inconsistent versions of our Lord's utterances, it is sometimes necessary to admit that they cannot both possess equal claims to historical accuracy. There are circumstances in which the ready assumption that both may have been uttered on different occasions is an improbable one. That is hardly the case with the verbal contradiction before us.[2]

It is not hard to reconcile these two sayings of our Lord if we attend to the context in which each was uttered. In the first case you will remember the disciples called upon their Master to rebuke one who was casting out devils in His name, and who nevertheless followed not them. In the other case our Lord was replying to the charge of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils — "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself

[1] A Communion address in New College Chapel to a society of clergymen.

[2] I do not mean to deny that the absence of the severer saying from the earlier Gospel and of the other version from St. Matthew may suggest a certain amount of critical doubt about the matter.

shall not stand. And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" In the one case the man was doing to the best of his ability,—successfully or unsuccessfully, in whatever way we understand the nature and the limits of this spiritual treatment of mental disease,—he was endeavouring to do in his own way the very self-same work in which Christ Himself was engaged. He was unauthorised (so far as it appears) by Christ Himself; he separated himself from the apostolic band, the nucleus of the infant Church; he had no authoritative commission or apostolical succession. Yet he was in his way (according to his lights) a follower of Jesus, who believed in His powers, and enlisted himself in Christ's own task of fighting against the powers of evil, bringing bodily and spiritual health to suffering humanity, setting up the Kingdom of Heaven among men. Such a man, the Master said, was on His side. Our Lord does not, of course, commend or approve this aloofness and self-sufficiency of his; in all likelihood it would have been better for him and for others if he had joined himself to the apostolic company, and learned more of what Jesus had to teach. But still he was not to be opposed, or denounced, or rebuked. Sympathy, help, instruction—of these things, it might be said, he stood in need. Rebuke would have done no good to the work in which both were engaged. On the other occasion, the Pharisees had been disparaging, opposing, ascribing to the powers of evil, work the

goodness of which and the efficacy of which they could not deny, — holding aloof from the whole spiritual movement which Christ was inaugurating, and that on the strength of a theological hypothesis suggested by pure malignity. In part our Lord's words may be regarded as a continuation of His former argument — "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. . . . If Satan casteth out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand?" "A man must be on one side or the other," we may suppose Him to say. If Satan were what he was commonly supposed to be, he could not be undoing what, from the medical point of view of the time, was his own work, promoting the good which it was his chief object to hinder. But there is also, no doubt, a reference to the objecting critics, or to others who were led by such suggestions to doubt whether what they saw before them was the work of God, and to hold aloof, though not actually to oppose. In practical crises like these, a man must be on one side or the other. Those who were not actively engaged on the side of Christ and His preaching, and the kingdom of God which He was setting up, were really doing what they could to hinder it. He that took no part in the warfare was really siding with the enemy, swelling the rising tide of suspicion and misunderstanding and antagonism which was soon to bring about the Master's death, and to end (as it seemed for the moment) the movement which He had inaugurated.

It is hardly going far beyond the actual letter of our Lord's teaching, if, for our own guidance, we modernise it thus. In theological and ecclesiastical matters, our maxim should be, "He that is not against us is for us." On the practical side the rule must be, "He that is not with Christ is against Him." Doctrinal differences, ecclesiastical separation, should not prevent our acknowledging, sympathising with, co-operating (as far as we can) with every kind and sort of people who are fighting for Christ and for His ideal, as they understand it, to the best of their power. We need not limit the principle to those who profess and call themselves Christians. Even those who do not name the name of Christ we must regard as on His side just in so far as they are doing the work of Christ. We can sympathise and co-operate on the moral side with people who are more or less detached from the strictly religious side or theological side of Christianity; and we can co-operate in many matters of social reform or philanthropy with those whose ideal is not on all points the ideal which the Christian Church exists to set forth. If Christ Himself regarded the combating of bodily disease as part of His work, then the work of social reform is the business of His Church; and its members must be zealous in taking their part in such work, even when it is initiated and carried on by many who follow not them nor their Master.

On the theoretical side our maxim must be, "Toleration, sympathy, large-mindedness"; but on

the practical side we must remember the other complementary truth, "Lukewarmness, indifference, want of zeal in the practical following of Christ is opposition to Him. An inactive, unmilitant, non-missionary Christianity is anti-Christianity." I do not mean, of course, that we must be forward or ready to condemn other people who may seem to us to fall short in this respect, still less to invoke these words of our Lord against those who may not co-operate in some particular kind of practical work in which we are engaged or may happen to think particularly important. It is to ourselves that we should apply the principle. And the principle is one which deserves especially to be remembered by those who are most fond of appealing to the other principle in speculative matters. Toleration, liberality, large-mindedness, charity—these are nowadays fairly easy virtues to most of us, or at least something which we take for those virtues; though in clergymen it may still sometimes require a little courage to avow such sentiments. But as compared with our predecessors, we of the present generation are rarely tempted to the harsher forms of bigotry and intolerance, even those of us who may be strongly attached to some more or less conservative form of theological opinion. But especially for those of us who are inclined to the opinions which are called Liberal or Broad in a more technical sense, there is a real danger that we should mistake indifference for tolerance; theological latitude for real Christian charity; mere immunity from superstí-

tion, or what the eighteenth century called enthusiasm, for real spirituality. We should not allow the unjust taunts and imputations of ribald ecclesiastical journals to prevent our recognising that theological emancipation (as we may call it)—emancipation from crude and narrow theories, imaginary terrors, baseless superstitions—does bring with it some moral and religious dangers. That there is moral gain on the whole, that in the long run Wisdom will be justified of her children, I do not doubt. But that there is real danger to deep faith, earnest devotion, practical zeal, for the time being, cannot, I think, be denied. It is strange, no doubt, that it should be so, but so it too often is. Those who, if we took them at their word, believe in a God who is capable of the most arbitrary injustice, who is pictured either as a sort of Moloch, devoting whole generations of men to endless torture by arbitrary decrees, or else as a sort of ecclesiastical martinet, insisting with fussy punctiliousness upon the correct performance of a round of petty observances, so often (must we not acknowledge?) exhibit far more grasp on the Christian ideal of brotherhood in their hearts and in their lives, than those who intellectually base their theology on the fatherhood and universal love of God. It is a moral gain, no doubt, to get rid of the horrible idea of everlasting flames, of which men might stand in danger for a momentary carelessness, an accidental death without the opportunity of repentance or the opportunity of absolution; but it is a mistake to assume that we necessarily care more for

goodness for its own sake, because we do not believe in everlasting torments, and perhaps do not realise very deeply or very frequently the perfectly rational idea of a future punishment or purgatory ordained by a loving God for the spiritual good of His children. A liberal theology is not necessarily a vague theology, but there is a greater difficulty (let us recognise it) in making it a living, efficacious influence over conduct —in cultivating that horror of sin, and that zeal for the spiritual improvement of others, that interest in the individual soul, which is so often felt by those to whom the only worthy object of life is the rescue of as many as may be from an appalling or irremediable doom.

And if the difficulty of realising and acting upon a religious creed becomes in some ways greater when that creed is less formulated, less materialistic, less arbitrary than it used to be, still greater is the danger of slackness and irreverence on the side of practical devotion,—as to those usages of prayer, worship, self-examination, religious reflection and resolution, without which (experience seems to show) religion cannot really continue to influence the heart and the life. When we have discovered that prayer is not a mechanical means for influencing the course of external nature; when we have discovered that worship is a means to an end, and not an end in itself; when we have discovered that sacraments and Sunday observance and Bible reading are not magical charms,—there is a great and real danger that we should grow weary of the

effort that they cost, of the time that they take, of the sacrifice that they call for. When we have realised that the efficacy of such means of grace and the evil consequences of their neglect have sometimes been overrated, there is some fear lest we should overlook their real effect on character, and underestimate those particular sides of character to the cultivation of which they are most indispensable. As we study the history of religious thought, we do indeed find ample testimony to the spiritual value, the direct moral value, of free inquiry and intellectual thoroughness and constant criticism of traditional ideas. In the end, no doubt, Obscurantism is destructive of character; the ages of blindest credulity have been the ages of lowest depravity. But we do also find that very often, at this or that moment of history, the practical truth and insight have been on the side that was intellectually wrong.

No admiration for the virtues of those who believe what we doubt should ever for one moment make us palter with truth, make us play at believing things we really can't believe, or try to keep up in others beliefs which we have ceased to hold ourselves. But it should lead us to extract the very maximum of spiritual truth that is contained in theories which, as they stand, we regard as intellectually untenable; to make the maximum use of the outward ordinances which may sometimes be recommended on superstitious grounds; to cultivate by every means in our power the habit of reverence and devotion as a

means to watchfulness, recollectedness, an anxious conscientiousness, a sense of God's presence in our daily lives.

There is going on in Germany a real religious revival. The school of Ritschl—the school represented among living theologians by such names as Harnack, Hermann, Wendt, and Kaftan—are leaders of a real religious revival as well as of a theological movement. With their emphatic assertion of the personal side of religion, with their determination to set Christ Himself, instead of the dogmas about Him, in the centre of their religious thought, and to insist on the necessity of personal and conscious communion with God revealed in Christ, we shall do well to be in sympathy. But in their disparagement of all outward worship, of signs and symbols, of the corporate life of the Christian community, they are (as it appears to me) making a great mistake.[1] The word "ecclesiastical" has become to many of them positively a term of abuse. In that Ritschlian movement lies, I venture to think, the best hope for the religious life of Germany; but the school has not as yet exercised a tithe of the practical influence for good which has been exercised in England by the Evangelical movement and the Oxford movement, with all their intellectual narrowness. The Ritschlians have

[1] In the case of some Ritschlians, "non-insistence" would be truer than "disparagement"; to some, perhaps, it may be altogether inapplicable: but the expression is not too strong as applied to Harnack. The brilliant writings of Wernle represent the anti-ecclesiastical spirit in a still more aggressive form.

something to learn from the Oxford movement if they want to imitate its usefulness; and so have we. Let us endeavour to identify ourselves as intimately as we may be allowed to do with the tradition of reverent devotion and corporate activity, which is the happy heritage of our English Church; let us identify ourselves as much as we possibly can with the religious life and the practical activities around us, while we strive to cultivate in ourselves, and to communicate to others, that spirit of free inquiry and open-mindedness which is, no less than zeal and devotional fervour, a manifestation of the Spirit of God.

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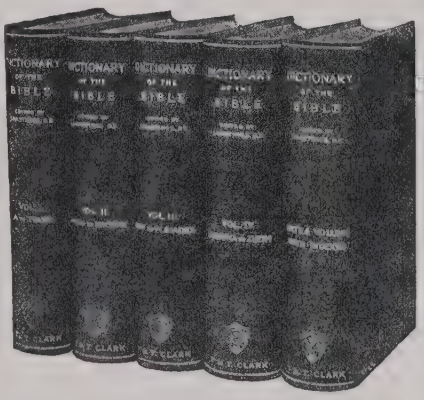

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